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A LIFE-SEARCH

AFTER

RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

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THE WAY TO REST:

RESULTS OF

A LIFE-SEARCH AFTER RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

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BY

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D. b-27

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PREFACE.

THE WORD 'REST' in connexion with this volume is used in the sense of settledness of belief. Such rest is good, not that the mind may be free to luxuriate, but that it may be prompted to action. The relation is intimate between firm religious faith, and steady religious effort. I would strengthen the conviction of my readers, and minister to their peace by disposing them to usefulness.

Little reference is made to books in the following pages. The work is addressed to thoughtful enquirers, not to polemics. My aim has been to establish principles. I have no controversy with persons.

April 1866.

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THE WAY TO REST.

SECTION I.

MAN IN HIS MORAL RELATIONS.

IT is something startling, and even humiliating, to be obliged to admit that an increase of thinking among us must lead, not so much to greater unity, as to a greater diversity of thought. But hitherto the law of progress has clearly taken this tendency along with it, and it is likely to do so. In respect to religion especially, we no doubt have much both to unlearn and to learn, and thinking is the process which issues naturally in this double kind of change. But it must not be hastily concluded that the old opinions which men abandon in an age of dissettlement like the present are necessarily false, nor that the new opinions which they adopt are necessarily true. We may change error for truth, and it may be that under these new influences we only change one form of error for another. In both of these cases there is change, but only in the former is there progress.

This distinction between change and progress is of so

much importance that there is hardly another which it behoves the truth-seeker to bear more constantly in mind. In one age the iteration of old dogmas may have become a cant; and in another the iteration of novelties may become so prevalent and unintelligent as to deserve no better name. The stress upon fidelity and courage, moreover, may lie upon those who abide by the old, fully as much as upon those whose convictions urge them to proclaim the new. It may of course be safely concluded that the new ideas of our time will embrace some new truth, or something tending to correct or modify our apprehensions of the old truth. But to what extent this is really the fact is a point which demands the most careful discrimination we can bring to it.

In regard to the questions which will arise in these pages, I shall make the best effort in my power to look at them independently and impartially. It is not possible that they should be to me as questions which have come to me for the first time. But the evidence in relation to them shall be weighed with the most jealous caution. My age may seem to suggest that a promise of this kind cannot be much relied upon. Old men, it is said, do not change. As a rule it may be so, but even this rule has its exceptions. Cases have occurred in which the grey-headed have shown that they were not insensible to the truth and beauty of new ideas. At all events, the confidence of the reader will not be less from his being assured that the writer is resolved that no effort shall be spared to deserve it. I have the impression that this deliberate and renewed search after light and life will be profitable to myself, whatever it may be to others.

If we suppose man to open his eyes on created things in the full possession of his faculties, amidst the many objects of wonder to him the greatest would be found in himself. Nor is it really otherwise with him now, though his faculties come to maturity by slow degrees. His observation passes readily from matter to instinct, and from instinct to reason. From what he is as regards capacity, it is easy to see what he should be as regards character. Created things are generally perfect in their kind, and man, the highest created existence known to us, should be thus perfect. The condition of intelligent and spiritual being possible to him, is the condition of being proper to him. Such is the state natural to him; and everything in his present state which is not that, is unnatural. We can conceive of his intelligence as allied with truth—with truth only; of his spiritual nature as allied with goodness—with goodness only; and of his whole inner being as the seat of a calm and perfect happiness. Whatever prevents his intelligent or his moral nature from being so conditioned must be imperfection, evil, bondage. To be truly free, is to be free to choose the true and to reject the false; to choose the good and to reject the evil; and so to realise the happy and to avoid the unhappy. My nature is so constituted that I cannot avoid these convictions in relation to it. For it not to be in this state, is for it to be in a state not good for it, not natural to it. To me it is clear, that of no other condition *ought* I to say, *can* I say, it is enough—I am satisfied.

Nor can it be pretended that this desire of personal perfection is in any sense a form of personal selfishness. It is innate in every creature that it should tend toward,

and in a sense aspire to, perfection after its kind. In man this is no more than duty toward himself, and duty toward the Creator, supposing there to be a Creator. Existence is a blight, a failure, in the measure in which it fails of this end.

Nor can I distrust these convictions because some men are so sunk in ignorance and sensuousness, or so perverted by vicious habits of thought, as not to possess them. I see very clearly how it is they have them not. I can see that this failure is not from any defect in the constitution of their nature, but from the depraved habit to which they have submitted it. If my convictions be not truth to them, I feel sure that they ought so to be, and that they are truth to me. To what these convictions may naturally lead is not a question to be discussed in this place. At present I have simply to do with their reality and reasonableness, and I feel that so long as my nature shall exist, these conceptions must exist along with it.

Judging thus concerning the state of human nature as it *should* be, I have now to look to what it *is* as this world presents it.

The testimony of good men, in all ages, with regard to questions of good or evil, must be entitled to special consideration. And I find good men affirming, and affirming the more emphatically according to the measure of their goodness, that man as we know him in this world does not realise the true end of his existence, has never so done, and, left to himself, is not likely so to do. In this respect the most virtuous of the heathen sages, and the most inspired of the Hebrew prophets, deliver the same judgment. We look to men skilled in science for

trustworthy opinions on matters of science, and to men who have been students of art for an enlightened estimate of art. It is so with morals and religion. Other things being equal, where the moral and spiritual faculties have been most cultivated, the opinions avowed on questions of that nature are opinions which should certainly be weighed with great deference. In relation to moral excellence, as in relation to general taste, our sensibilities become coarse and erring through neglect, and refined and true by culture. On moral and religious subjects, accordingly, the men who have most right to be heard are good men. Such men have an insight of their own. They are better guarded than other men against deception, and can see much further.

And what is the judgment of such men in regard to the moral state of man? I find it to be a ceaseless lament over his manifest degeneracy—over the distance which separates between what he should be, according to the constitution of his nature, and what he is from depraved habit. He is not only estranged from the true end of his being, but, considered in himself, the estrangement must be regarded as hopeless. It is possible to conceive of his regeneration and perfection, but restricting our thoughts to the light of nature, we see not whence this change can come—see no ground on which to feel in any degree confident that it ever will come.

But not only are good men agreed in this general verdict; it is observable that even bad men concur to a large extent in the same affirmation, and sometimes even go beyond good men in their censure of the evil they find in humanity. Bad men, indeed, are not much

given to ideal speculation as to what human nature should be, or might be, in its higher relations; but they have their own standard concerning things which should be accounted honourable or generous, and things which should be accounted base and selfish. Such men do not glance at the past without seeing in imagination, at many points in their history, the men who have injured them, and they have only to consult their feeling in reference to such persons, even when long years have intervened since the wrong was perpetrated, to be sure that, in their own estimation at least, moral evil is in the world, and in forms to be execrated. And as I listen to the language in which such men commonly describe the humanity about them—language used by them in seasons when it may be supposed to express a settled impression, I find that the bad men of to-day, and the good men in the past centuries, have very much the same tale to tell. Were these two classes of persons invited to give an analysis of the disease concerning which they so speak, their representations would no doubt differ in some respects from each other. This comes naturally from the fact that the good man looks to religion as including the highest form of the beautiful, and the bad man looks to the conduct of men simply in their social and lower relations. What the human nature is which such men have found there, may be seen in the maxims of a Machiavelli, a Chesterfield, or a Rochefoucault. No such books as these men have written could have been written had not the human nature about them been radically corrupt, even in respect to the immediate and secular range of moral obligation to which the cognizance of such men is restricted. Some philosophers, as is well

known, have maintained that all the seeming virtues of mankind, if strictly analysed, will be found to resolve themselves into so many forms of the selfish; and these men appeal with confidence to our general consciousness as furnishing evidence sufficient to warrant their theory. Surely speculations of this sort could never have had place among us, had not the moral declensions of our race been of the gravest description. I cannot conceal from myself that conclusions which minds of the highest intelligence, whether good or bad, have been thus agreed in affirming, must be conclusions resting upon evidence of a kind not to be resisted.

Men not given to speculation on this subject, but who have their natural impressions concerning it, are witnesses, in their own manner, to the same effect. Generally, they not only know that they have often suffered wrong, but that they have often so yielded to temptation that they ought to blame themselves as wrong-doers, and that they might be justly so blamed by others. Often this consciousness of guilt becomes very painful, sometimes a burden too heavy to be borne. Public instructors describe humanity continually as being in this condition, and no one thinks of questioning the truth of the representation. It must be remembered, too, that this feeling of self-reproach under the memory of wrong-doing is involuntary. Bad men would free themselves from it if they could. But it is not to be repressed. It may be said, and has been said—this is all conventional. Society is charged with such ideas, and the individual is of course influenced by the atmosphere around him. But this does not at all mend the case. For then we have to ask—how came society to be

possessed with such conceptions, or to be susceptible of such feeling? To attempt to shift the blame in this manner from the individual to society, is to show that it is not the individual only that must be said to be depraved, but that humanity at large is thus at fault. Whence comes society? Clearly from what is common to humanity and essential to it. Humanity creates society, and makes it what it is. The tree is known by its fruit. Philosophers or priests would reiterate their dogmas on human depravity to small purpose, were there not a witness to the truth of such teaching in the consciousness of our nature.

But the fact that imperfection, selfishness, moral deterioration, is thus prevalent among men, is not more certain than the fact that there are moral and religious susceptibilities in human nature which seem to be imperishable, and which serve to check our evil tendencies, so as to prevent men from becoming so depraved as they might be. Beyond doubt, a high degree of natural virtue is thus secured to society. Society is clearly of divine institution. Magistracy is evidently an ordinance of the Creator. It supposes the existence of social virtue, and its aim is to guard and strengthen such virtue. This must be obvious in the degree in which the magistrate becomes a terror to evil-doers and a praise to those who do well. It is true that it is only by means of civil government that a man can realise safety for his own person and property; and mere selfishness, in consequence, may suffice to render him careful to uphold such authority. It is a manifest law of Providence, that to have these interests safe in my own case, I must join to guarantee their safety in the case of my neighbour.

Nevertheless it is a fact, that government is everywhere based avowedly on moral ideas, and sustained professedly for great moral ends. It is the organised expression of the common feeling in regard to the great law of right which should determine the conduct of man toward man. It embodies moral elements which resemble fragments saved from a general wreck—fragments rescued and preserved from its being seen that apart from their presence society could not exist.

Eminent virtues, accordingly, have come into play in the enactment of human laws, and in the administration of those laws. Nowhere do we find the intellectual and ethical nature of man in finer action than in some connections of this nature. But, on the other hand, who shall estimate the amount of folly and wickedness which have taken the shape of law, and have come out in the modes of giving effect to law? Governments, as a rule, have been despotic and tyrannical; free government being the rare exception—and how short-lived have these exceptions been, and how imperfect even at the best! It may be true that a bad government is much better than none, but in this department the apparent dominance of the evil over the good has often been such, that the spirit animating the rulers of nations would seem to have come much more from beneath than from above. When I consider these things, my impression as to the general condition of human intelligence and of human virtue becomes painful and humiliating. Even in this view, it is a sad and crazy world for the most part. It needs mending—mending everywhere. Civil oppression —religious persecution—what chapters are these in the world's history!

If we pass now from social to domestic life, the change may seem to be for the better, but it is so only partially. No rational man will deny that the virtues to be found in domestic life are real and potent. The affections proper to the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, present the aspect of our nature which we feel to be the most generally just, attractive, and beautiful. But how far is our nature from being what it should be even in these relations? Looking to the world at large, what has been the course of man towards woman? Has it not been, for the most part, inconsiderate, unjust, oppressive, cruel? In all cases, the affections under consideration are in a great degree instinctive, allied with what is so far personal as hardly to be free from the selfish, and while needful, if there are to be families on earth, they are often so restricted to that narrow circle as rarely to touch upon anything beyond, even with regard to this world, and still less in regard to the next. The qualities we see in the provident father, in the anxious mother, and in the sympathies to which their feeling is the centre, are amongst the most estimable and pleasing qualities of our nature. But how often are human beings far other in these respects than their duty demands, and how low commonly are the aspirations of the feeling thus awakened even where the least defective! What man is satisfied with the condition of humanity even in this view of it? What man is satisfied with his own condition in this view? Who among us having power to create a rational and moral nature can imagine that he should have been content to create it in such a state?

I must confess that these facts touching the condition

of human nature are to me a great mystery—a deep sadness. I see the ignorant and toiling multitude living a coarse and sensuous life, and what there is in them above the animal, existing merely to do service to the animal. I see the more cultivated and wealthy given to a circle of pleasures of a somewhat higher grade, but which are for the most part very frivolous, and wholly of the earth, earthy. I see the more intellectual classes wise enough, it may be, in many instances, to subject their inferior nature to a measure of proud self-government, but with their minds as devoid of any clear or settled expectation of some day becoming what such natures should be, as the lowest beneath them. The Being who has made me capable of deploring this spectacle cannot, I feel assured, look upon it himself with approval. If I have any trustworthy conviction within me, it is the conviction which tells me that my Maker must not be supposed to be the author of this order of things. My moral being is against such a supposition. My spiritual consciousness affirms that somewhere the Author of my being must be revealed through facts of quite another complexion. Wars, captivities and oppressions, dungeons, stakes and instruments of torture—all speak to me a language literally horrible. Men need these things, or they do not. If not —then why are they here? And if needed—what must be the condition of a nature requiring such a discipline?

Pass from man in his private and social relations, to his state in regard to religion, and the transition is into a new field of difficulty. Man is constituted to become a religious being. This purpose is written in the very texture of his nature. In his inner being, his proper

self, we see a wonderful mechanism. Understanding, which can distinguish largely between what is fact and what is not fact. Reason, by the aid of which he can use all the material of knowledge catered by the understanding, so as to distinguish not only between what is fact and not fact, but between right and wrong. Conscience too, a mysterious power, enthroned as a moral judge, to take note—to do so whether the man himself shall be pleased with its so doing or not—as to all acts of the faculty we designate Will in its choice between things as seen to be true or false, good or evil. Then there is the memory, which with a marvellous tenacity can hold the past up to the present, so that it shall be as though always present; and further, there is the imagination, which, with a celerity that makes even the lightning a loiterer, can people all space, visible and invisible, and all duration, with its images of weal or woe. With all these powers of the intellect, we have to ally the moral and religious susceptibilities of the heart—susceptibilities which are so far under the sway of conscience that they can be made the seat of a peace like heaven, or of a misery like hell, as the verdict of that judge shall be one of approval or of censure. This spirit, this strangely compacted nature, is so fenced about that no hand can reach it. There are coarse implements with which men can destroy the body, but after that there is no more that they can do. The body of man may die. Man may not die. His spiritual being must last on.

To what end then is the human spirit thus constructed and endowed? In creation as directly known to us, the mind of man stands alone in its capacity to make moral distinctions. It was of course designed to make such

distinctions, to make them in all conceivable relations, and especially in the highest relation. But to say this is to say that man, from the very constitution of his being, is designed to live, not only a moral, but a religious life. To speak of him as a creature, is to suppose the existence of a Creator; and to suppose the Creator to have made man thus, necessitates the conclusion that the design in his creation was, that he should see the right in his relation to the Supreme Being, no less certainly than in his relation to his fellow-beings. All this is so clear that miracle itself could not make it clearer. A hand writing this truth upon the wall would only be the hand writing there what the same hand has written long ago with all the fixity and certainty of law within us. To suppose that a being so constituted was designed to be mindful of the duties arising out of his relations to created being, and to be left insensible to the claims of the Supreme Being, would be not merely irrational, it would be absurd, monstrous. It may be agreeable to the nature of some men to regard the earth, stored as it is, and canopied as it is, as serving its highest purpose when it becomes the home of a farmer who will not lie, or of traffickers who will not cheat. But such perversity can only show how lost to reason minds may become which should be governed by reason.

It was common a century since for men to speak of religion as if it were a wholly factitious thing, devised and fashioned by kings and priests to serve the purposes of their craft. No one will deny that kings and priests have often so used the religious susceptibilities of men. But kings and priests did not create those susceptibilities, nor could they destroy them if they would.

They have found these intangible and subtile powers in man, and have been made to feel that they are powers which no hand can eradicate, which no law can bind. Men cannot bring themselves to believe that there is not an invisible beyond the visible; nor can they escape the conviction that the unseen must be greater, more wonderful than the seen. It is true, the objects with which the human imagination peoples the unseen are widely different. When examined, the gods of pagan nations are generally found to be reflections of their worshippers, natures governed by the same passions, and given to the same pleasures. Rude and savage nations have rude and savage deities. Luxurious communities worship divinities supposed to be fascinated with pomp, splendour, and sensuous indulgence. But in every case, there are the gods, and in the train of the gods come the priesthoods, the temples, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, and all the things which make up the known systems of religion.

But it is not more certain that this religious susceptibility is inseparable from man, and special to him, than that here, where we find the highest distinction of his nature, we also find its greatest weakness. The deep necessity of his being is, that he should become in some sense religious; and his deepest want is, possession of the knowledge and power that may enable him to become truly religious. He can worship the forces of nature. He can deify human passions. But left to himself, he does not find out God. Metaphysics have never given existence to a community of monotheists. The reason of man may not do that—it certainly has not done it. Neither the priests nor the philosophers of antiquity

were preachers of monotheism, and obviously because they knew that they lacked the authority necessary to render such teaching effectual. Such of them as had more or less of faith in that doctrine, were conscious that to attempt to make it popular by basing it upon mere reason would be worse than useless.

We know not what it would be in our own case to look upon nature wholly apart from the ideas of the supernatural now familiar to us. The revelations of Providence come to us along with a revelation claiming to be of a higher order, and it is our manner to accept the former as interpreted by the latter. What the result would be if we were capable of interrogating the facts about us altogether apart from such prepossessions, we can scarcely imagine. We have men among us, indeed, who seem to regard an enlightened deism as possible to men from the processes of reason. My impression is, that they deceive themselves on this point; that they attribute to their reason ideas which they have derived unconsciously from authority—from the Christian forms of thought which have grown up with them. It is certain that men have not found their path to such a creed very easy when they have been left to feel their own way toward it. Even a moderate progress in that direction has been a very rare exception. The rule has been something widely different.

Nor will any man be surprised at this result who has sufficient power of abstraction to look at the light of nature simply as it is. For it should be remembered that if we commit ourselves to this oracle at all, we must do so without reserve, being prepared to receive *all* its utterances. Now some of these utterances will

be found to be dark sayings, such as have often confounded the wisest and the best. The grand and the beautiful are no doubt there, but the monotonous, the barren, the malarious, and the offensive are also there. Creatures present themselves whose forms and clothing fascinate us as we gaze upon them. But with these are others whose shapes and ways seem intended to produce revulsion, and whose touch would be loathsome. In some of the actions of instinct, we see the tender, the unselfish—acts which seem almost to rise to moral goodness; while others are charged with venom, and bent upon assault and destruction. In fact, through the air, the earth, and the sea, creatures are everywhere seen feeding upon creatures. Nature, in this view of it, seems too nearly to resemble the monster parent described in the fable as feeding upon its own offspring. Nor is this endlessness of conflict, of suffering, and of death restricted to the animal creation. It extends to man. He too has his destructive propensities, not only killing other creatures, as the brute does, for food, but he is ever staining the earth with the blood of his own race, under the influence of malignant passions which prompt him to such deeds. And while men prey thus upon creatures and upon each other, the elements prey upon them, bringing upon them disease, and carrying them away through death—death in all its conceivable forms of painfulness.

Some men discourse about this world as being the best possible world—can they believe it? They tell us to look up through nature to nature's God. But is the God whom nature, as thus viewed, presents to us, a God in whom frail beings like ourselves can trust? The only

rational solution of this mystery is, that moral evil has in some way tainted this world from the beginning, not only by Adam's sin, but possibly by some moral agency long anterior to his; and that in consequence it is not presented as a perfect world, but as an imperfect world, in which imperfect beings may be trained to something much higher. It would seem to be a law, that wherever moral evil comes, the natural elements and the unconscious creatures should feel it—be subjected to the disorderly, the frail, and the perishing.

And if we pass from the natural to the spiritual—that is, to the supernatural, to the moral nature of man—we have a clear and a most affecting demonstration of the connection which obtains, and with all the constancy of law, between sin and suffering. As ill-regulated appetites—gluttony, drunkenness, and impurity—bring disease into the flesh, and shorten natural life; so ill-regulated passions put an end to harmony and peace in the human spirit, and fill it with all the elements which can bespeak 'a mind diseased.' Pride, vanity, envy, covetousness, anger, and other forms of emotional selfishness, become in the measure in which they grow strong within us, all to the mind that disease is to the body, charging it with disorder, fever, agony.

Now it is not a great mystery that personal fault should be followed by such retributive actions of natural law, however mysterious it may be that human beings should be so prone to rush into such faults. We may understand a system founded on that principle. But we find both the bodies and the minds of men exposed to much suffering that cannot be traced to their own fault, having clearly come from the fault of others. We all

reap as we sow. That is intelligible. But we all reap also as others have sown for us, and that is not so easily explained. We are born into an heritage of evils that we did not create, and we look round upon a sea of suffering let loose by the strong against the weak, by the bad against the better. Beings so conditioned may well ask—Whence is this? Why is this? And the only answer that comes to those dread enquiries, is a confused sound which no voice can articulate. It is certainly thus with the natural world, and if we consult our moral nature—assuredly our best guide on such questions—we find even that baffled and confounded by them.

In the speculations of the men of our time who restrict their search after truth to the old purely natural sources, I see scarcely anything beyond those old forms of thought which generated the old superstitions among the people, and the old uncertainties and contradictions among the philosophers. One of the most advanced thinkers of this class, at whose feet not a few of our intellectual magnates seem content to take their place, has said, 'All our thought, feelings, and actions flow 'spontaneously to their common centre in humanity, our 'supreme being—a being who is real, accessible, sym-'pathetic, because she is of the same nature with her 'worshippers.' Men who have no supreme being above humanity, are in fact Atheists, but the system of Comte lends its sanction to all the old systems of man-worship, and must end there.

Against this senseless and hopeless scheme of pure idolatry, my consciousness, both of head and heart, rebels with an intensity which I cannot describe. What authority have these men for dealing with humanity as

if it were a great person? How have they passed the chasm between the conscious individuality of my spirit and the same consciousness in themselves? They have not passed it at all. They have not the power to imagine how this may be done. Concerning the origin of being, Theism and Pantheism bring with them the same inscrutable mystery. But Pantheism adds to that mystery another, viz. that involved in the process which merges the distinction between creator and created—a process which no teacher can put into words, because to no man can it be an intelligible object of thought. It is a process which our individual consciousness rejects with all the force natural to a conviction amounting to certainty, as opposed to an assumption claiming to be admitted into its place though purely an assumption. And to what end has this outrage against all the laws of sober and rational investigation been perpetrated? It is done that man may be his own Alpha and Omega, with no God in the past, no hope in the future!

From this view of man in his moral and spiritual relations, it is clear to me that the deep necessity of his nature lies in the want of religious TEACHING and of religious HELP. His great need is a need of such teaching as may lead him to the conscious possession of religious truth; and of such help as may enable him to see how his sins may be forgiven, and how his nature may be raised above its present conflict with evil, and may realise the perfection possible to it. Is such teaching accessible to him? Is such help within his reach?

If we pass by the Christian revelation, the faith of the Pantheist is the only faith in the world which promises ultimate perfection to its votaries. But there the per-

fection supposed to be gained is gained purely by absorption—that is, by the loss of individuality. The promise to perpetuate the individual consciousness, and to make that consciousness the consciousness of a perfection of being, is peculiar to Christianity. In all other faiths, either the individual consciousness is lost, or if preserved, it is with a dreadful uncertainty as to the condition in which it will survive the body. My nature shrinks from the thought of this absorption. It is a kind of being which I cannot distinguish from a ceasing to be. Not less unsatisfactory is a state of incertitude as to what the 'after death' may reveal.

In Christianity I find a system which manifestly has come from an intelligence comprehending all my sense of need. Its report as to my state of being accords strictly with my own experience; and, like a skilful physician, it does not hesitate to lay bare the malady of my nature to its root, knowing that, however malignant it may be, there are means which if wisely applied will suffice to eradicate it. Modern philosophy, as generally known among us, does not look at man after this manner. It accepts the present state of man as the state in which he was created. It regards him as susceptible of moral improvement, and it aims to amend his condition as far as that may be deemed practicable. With this view it discourses concerning principles of morals, foundation of virtue, and similar topics. It is hoped that by such means men may become somewhat more virtuous, or at least in some degree less vicious. It points to many unseemly things that should not be done, and to many seemly things that should be done. In fact, the burden of its teaching relates to the external proprieties or the

legal necessities of this life. Of rightness of *feeling* it takes little or no cognisance. It evades—it dares not face the great mystery of evil. It expects no redemption in this world. It soars to no greatness in the world to come. It gives no account of man's bondage to evil. It gives no hope of his deliverance from it. Self-improvement is the only improvement possible to him. He has no helper. He can have no light, no purity, no happiness save what may be self-realised. To me, all such guides are physicians of no value. Bidding me thus fall back upon myself, they only mock my misery. I cannot think so meanly of man or of God as to rest in a faith of that order.

It is not thus with Christianity. Here the mystery of sin is not ignored. The present state of man is not accepted as his normal state. The distinctions between good and evil are presented in such a manner as to pervade and penetrate my moral nature. The majesty of law is upheld. Right is proclaimed as sacred everywhere and for ever. But these grand enunciations are not to leave man without hope. Left to nature he is lost. Aided by powers above nature he may be saved! The message which comes to him is in part a message of death. It should be so. But it is also a Gospel, good news, a message of life. To put an end to all dispute concerning the true destiny of man, it reveals the Incarnation, and places man before us as perfect in Jesus Christ. To aid us in apprehending the Divine Nature so as to confide in it, Christ is proclaimed as being the image of the Father. All that can demonstrate the terribleness of sin is set forth, but opposed to it is the Atonement of the Incarnate One, sufficient to remove all

sin. All that can be truly said concerning the strength of human depravity is admitted, but the power of the Holy Ghost, the Regenerator, is that of the stronger hand which can give deliverance. All these doctrines hold beautifully together. There is a wonderful symmetry in their relations to each other; and an adaptation in them no less wonderful to all the points of human need. They may all be seen to grow out of the Incarnation, and they all converge on one great result—a result the most Godlike that has ever been the subject of human thought. Man, right-minded man, jealous for the honour of God, here finds that honour duly guarded; and the man who must aspire to a spiritual purity and happiness hereafter above everything of that nature known in this world, has here warrant so to do. According to Christianity, the providence of this world is full of God. He answers prayer. He regulates the great and small in material things so as to make them subserve spiritual ends. Creation, as we see it, is a marred workmanship. This life, as we know it, is a disjointed and unfinished story. We must wait, even to see nature as it should be—as it must be, if its Author is ever to say of it again that it is 'good.' Above all we must wait to see how the perfect nature of Jesus Christ, which has come in upon us by a supernatural advent, is to become the model to which a race of redeemed natures shall be conformed. But all this is embraced in the vast sweep of purpose set forth by Christianity. Can I be sure, however, that Christianity is not in itself a creation from this sense of need in man? The most virtuous men feel it to be good that this message should be true. Is it certain that this has not been

the secret reason prompting such men to say—it *is* true? The demand exists. The supply has come—but whence? All systems of religion have been more or less adaptations to human wants and wishes—may it not be so here?

Men have a right to ask such questions. Hence the evidence of Christianity must be twofold. It must come in part from what Christianity is, and in part from the signs which attest it. It is complex and cumulative, in part external, and in part resulting from its own substance and influence. Some men lean mostly on one branch of this evidence, some on the other. Even its internal indications of truthfulness may be said to be twofold. Its judicial aspect is its great attraction with some minds. Its mystical influences are its sublimest evidence to others. Temperament determines the preference in such cases. Men of calm intellectuality are won by the first view; men of sensitive and imaginative susceptibilities become enamoured with the second. The well-balanced mind rests on no one section in this wide field of proof, but embraces all, assigning to each its due place. What then is the ground on which men embrace the Old and New Testament as historically truthful? And what is the ground on which they accept the teachings of these records as of divine origin? These are the questions I have endeavoured to examine seriously, fairly, and without prepossession of any kind.

SECTION II.

REVELATION.

The Old Testament.

OUR deistical writers a century ago, and some men amongst ourselves from whom other things might have been expected, have broached the idea that the Pentateuch and the earlier narratives concerning the Hebrew people, became such as they now are so late as the time of Josiah, or at the earliest, about the time of Samuel and David. In those days, it is said, the few obscure fragments from the tradition of the past were expanded by priests and scribes into their present fulness and detail, to serve their own professional purposes. If this could be proved, the need of further search as to the contents of the revelations supposed to be contained in those writings would be at an end. But the fact that those records have exercised so potent and protracted an influence on the mind of the human race, is enough to render the idea of their having been thus worthless from the beginning singularly incredible. As a question of historical criticism, to say nothing of the higher interests involved, the issue thus raised is one deserving careful consideration.

It is by no means my intention to attempt an examination of all the points on which the conclusion mentioned is based, but there is one track of thought which has not, I believe, been brought into requisition in relation to it, and which, in my judgment, is decisive against it. These fabricating scribes and priests are of course assumed to have had all but the entire field of the past open to them as space which they could fill in at their pleasure. For to suppose the people sufficiently acquainted with their history to have been capable of detecting imposture, is of course to surrender the theory of imposture. In that case, fabrication would not have been possible. The case then being so, the space of those past centuries was wholly at the disposal of these artful officials, in which to insert, to omit, or to colour, as might best serve their policy. What then is the character of the writings likely to have been so produced? It is obvious that such men would be careful to write so as not to offend the national prejudice, so as to flatter the national feeling, and so as to gain their object by securing the acceptance of representations framed with a view to it.

Now it is confessed that there are portions of these histories that must have been grateful to the feeling of a religious and high-minded people, such as these people certainly were from the time of David to that of Josiah. The miracles said to have been wrought in their favour; the conquest of the nations of Canaan by their arms; and the character of some of the men conspicuous in their annals, may be named as incidents of this nature. But a multitude of things in the narratives which they are supposed to have transmitted to us are of a sort to do no

credit to Hebrew history, which must in fact have been as gall and wormwood to Hebrew feeling.

The lives of the patriarchs are a singular piece of history to have come into existence after such a manner. Abraham is a man with some high elements of character. But even in Abraham we find very little of the sort of heroism which fiction is ever attributing so freely to the progenitors or founders of nations. His life, for the most part, is a very prosaic kind of life. In one instance he could utter the untrue, hoping to secure Sarah from harm by that means, in place of committing her to a higher keeping. The conduct both of Sarah and the Patriarch towards Hagar and Ishmael, was certainly such as to say little for the considerate and humane feeling of either of them. Isaac was a meditative man, of a temperament that does not verge much from the track of the equable, either for good or evil. If he did not err in some things with his father, neither did he rise to his level in others. Jacob, pious as he no doubt was, is manifestly a deterioration from both his predecessors. His treachery toward Esau; the deceit practised against his aged and blind father by untruth and imposture; his defrauding his elder brother of his birthright by such means; and his mother being a deliberate party to these proceedings—all these facts present a picture of demoralised family feeling which no sophistry can save from the gravest censure. The after life of Jacob was too much in accordance with this beginning. True, Laban was a man of cunning ways, and of great selfishness; but Jacob could foil him at his own weapons, and seems to care quite as much as a good man should do, about his food to eat, his raiment to put on, and the 'bands'

he could muster as his following. Altogether, we see none of those high attributes in Jacob which we find in men placed by mythic invention at the head of peoples destined to greatness. Nothing, however, can be more in place than these sketches of patriarchal life, if we accept them as real history. The very faults of the men and women, and the homeliness of the details relating to them, are all wonderfully true to nature; while nothing could be more unlike what invention, aiming to conciliate the vanity or pride of after ages, could have been prompted to devise.

If we descend from Jacob to his sons, these supposed fabricators of history blunder still more strangely. These twelve sons of Jacob are to be proclaimed as the heads of the twelve Hebrew tribes. Here then, if anywhere, these cunning scribes might be expected to move with caution, taking the greatest care that nothing shall be said concerning these eminent persons not likely to be agreeable to the tribes boasting of their descent from them. Nothing could be more natural, in the case supposed, than that the high qualities and commanding genius commonly assigned in the fabulous periods of history to men so related, should be attributed to these chiefs of their race. But is it so? By no means. If you except Joseph, and the indication of some humane feeling in Reuben, we find no marked excellence ascribed to any one of them. On the contrary, are they not all before us as men convicted of gross crime? Their conduct toward the men of Shechem, shows them to have been capable of treachery and of the most deliberate blood-guiltiness. But it is the course which they are said to have taken toward Joseph which brands them

the most deeply. Joseph, the son of his father's old age, has a special place in the affection of his venerable parent. In his fondness for the boy, Jacob clothes him in a coat of many colours, and finds pleasure in looking on the graceful form of the lad as thus attired. But jealousy on the part of the brothers is the result of this favouritism. The youth, frank and unsuspecting, tells his brothers his dreams—dreams which seem to say to them, though not probably to him, that he is born in some way to take precedence of them. The brothers are moving with their flocks over the unpeopled plains of Shechem, and they see Joseph, who had been sent to them by his father, in the distance. The solitariness of the place suggests that a murder might be perpetrated there without the chance of detection, and the thought being instantly broached, they at once resolve that the dreams of this dreamer shall come to an end. Joseph shall be murdered.* Under Reuben's influence, they consent not to stain their weapons with his blood, and agree to drop him into a cave near at hand, where his fate would be to die a less violent but really a more cruel death. In the end he is sold to the Ishmaelite strangers as a bondsman. And now they slay an animal, that they may dip the coat of many colours in its blood, and present the garment in that state to the father as evidence that his son must have been slain by some wild beast. Their dark deed was to be followed by this confederated lie; and this though they must have known that the utterance of it would possibly be as the arrow of death to the heart of their aged sire. But that matters not. If a virtual fratricide is to follow a virtual parricide, so be it. Their jealousy shall have vent, their wounded pride shall

be avenged, even at that cost, and Reuben shall not dare to disclose the truth. Be it remembered, too, that while such are the bad deeds laid to the charge of these men —mean, dastardly, cruel deeds all of them, without an element of chivalry about them—of good deeds to place over against them we see no sign. From what we know of human nature in such circumstances, I can suppose all this possible as real history; but that men fashioning the book of Genesis to their taste or policy long centuries afterwards, could so have delineated the heads of the Hebrew tribes, in place of aiming so to colour the story as to make the nation proud of it, that I cannot suppose. The thing is not to be conceived as possible. . . .

To descend lower is only to find evidence of this description thickening about us. The twelve patriarchs die. Their descendants become a nation. But what sort of nation? The elaborated picture given of them presents them as a nation of bondsmen—slaves toiling at the brick-kilns of their Egyptian masters. If these pseudo-historians were really at liberty to invent an origin for their nation, is this the manner in which they would have been likely to have availed themselves of that liberty? It was to tell the Hebrew tribes that they were all sons of the base-born; and to a proud Oriental people no reproach cast upon them could have roused greater indignation. And it is some upstart of to-day who sets forth this account of things—wholly without apparent warrant—as having been the true history of this people many centuries before!

But the bondsmen are liberated, and their liberation is brought about by means of great miracles, such as should have made faith in Jehovah, in the face of any

imaginable difficulty, an easy service. But are these people a people prepared to live a life thus elevated? Far from it. The servile temper natural to their abject condition in Egypt remains in them. After all the wonders they had witnessed in that land, the trial at the shore of the Red Sea finds them lost to all courage and utterly faithless; and after the deliverance there wrought, if they want bread, they dream not of the power of Jehovah as sufficient to provide it, but talk in a rebellious tone of being brought into the wilderness to die. So, when they want water. And after being shaken by the terrors of Sinai, because Moses remains longer in the mount than is pleasing to them, they begin to say jauntily that they know not what is become of this Moses; and having set up their golden calf, they sit down to feast before it, and then rise up to play. So the carcases of that generation were doomed, it is said, to fall in the wilderness, and the next generation is to be specially educated to take possession of the Promised Land. Servile was their condition in Egypt; more servile, low, and inexcusable is the spirit attributed to them in the wilderness.

Now if the scribe class in the time of David or Josiah were free to *make* a history touching that remote age, is this the sort of history they would have made? To place before the people for the first time, in those later days, this brick-kiln life of their forefathers, these signs of their stupid faithlessness in the face of such wonders, and this hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt in total heedlessness of the high destiny held out to them in the divine promise—all this is description we might expect from an enemy intent upon chafing a people into mad-

ness; but to believe that the men who wrote thus were men who hoped by this means to win the popular favour is really beyond our power.

If we pass from the age of Moses to the times of the Judges the facts before us are such as to suggest a similar course of criticism. The reign of the Judges is said to have extended to something more than four centuries, and if these supposed fabricators found that space left entirely at their disposal, how were they likely to have filled it up? Could they possibly have felt prompted to make their narrative little more than a monotonous alternation between religious apostacy and national discomfiture and shame? What had they to gain by inventing such a character as Ehud, and the story of his deed of assassination? Or by describing Abimelech as a judge popular enough to command armies and gain victories, though stained with the blood of more than seventy brothers, and capable, not only of depopulating cities by the sword, but of dooming imprisoned men, women, and children by the thousand to the flames? What a picture is given of the slaughter perpetrated by Jephthah against the tribe of Ephraim; and of the still greater carnage in the quarrel between the tribe of Benjamin and the other tribes? Some rays of heroism indeed glance upon us here and there, as in the histories of Gideon, of Jephthah, and of Deborah; but, on the whole, what a dreary waste have we traversed as we pass through those long centuries! Turbulence, revolution, and a ruthless sweeping away of life seem to meet us everywhere. Intervals of a more tranquil and happy nature we can suppose there were, but the historian makes no note of them. That such jottings concerning

those dark and troubled days existed among the Hebrew records, and that the scribes who copied them in later times felt it to be imperative upon them to adhere strictly to what was before them, may be readily understood; but that skilful men, desirous of securing acceptance for their inventions among their contemporaries, could have regarded those centuries as open to any order of events they might be inclined to associate with them, and that the book of Judges should be the result, is assuredly incredible.

No doubt there are a few sentences in those earlier Scriptures which betray the presence of a hand as recent as the time of Samuel and David. But the question is not whether the transcriptions of those ancient writings which have reached us are of that later date or not—that may very well be—but whether we should regard the writings themselves as being entirely, or all but entirely, productions of that later age. That I conclude to have been impossible, for the reasons assigned, and for many more.

During four centuries after the entrance upon Canaan, the Israelites were ruled by judges. The reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon extended over the next eighty years. Then came the separation of the ten tribes, the founding of the kingdom of Israel apart from the kingdom of Judah, and the extinction of this new kingdom after existing somewhat more than two centuries. A century later brings us to the return of the Jews from Babylon, and the re-establishment of their kingdom. Eight centuries had then passed away since the deliverance from Egypt. And now it is, in the reign of the young king Josiah, that the book of the law is said to be found, and

a new epoch in the history of this people is said to begin —the book found consisting, not as was pretended, of the ancient annals of the nation, but of a few slight traditions of the past, mixed with all kinds of inventions now for the first time clustered about them.

The facts I have selected from patriarchal history, and from the conduct of the Israelites in Egypt and in the wilderness, are only samples of the class that may be adduced from every subsequent stage in the history of these people as given in these writings. We have seen that the condition of the Israelites under the Judges, is set forth there as unsettled, rude, turbulent, and often very humiliating. We have to search for a feature in it which is really pleasing. What a failure is the reign of Saul. How deep the stain which is made to rest on the character of David. What a cloud overshadows the glory of Solomon. The history of the kingdom of Israel is the history of a ceaseless religious declension, and of its consequent chastisements; and the history of the kingdom of Judah bears too near a resemblance to it. If we suppose these events to have happened, and record to have been made of them at the time, and to have been carefully preserved, so that, however distasteful many of the things recorded might be, there could be no getting away from them, we can then account very naturally for the existence of such documents. But if we are expected to believe that the Israelites were so ignorant concerning their own history in the time of Josiah, that any set of clever scribes might impose almost anything upon them as being that history, and that the Scriptures we now possess are in the main the result of a deception of that kind then practised, I must say that I

find belief in such a view of things to be simply impossible. The supposed fabricators, in place of gaining any power over the nation by means of such inventions, would more probably have been stoned to death, as being guilty of libelling the dead, and of calumniating a whole people, the fraud being everywhere aggravated by impiety.

Among the faculties conspicuous among the Hebrew race was that of organisation—a facility for perpetuating order, and in preserving whatever it was important to preserve. Their laws relating to tribes, and families, and property, no less than those relating to priesthood and worship, are all such as to suggest that the people for whom they were designed must have been known to be capable of entering into such elaborate adjustments, and of comprehending them. Of course, a people once trained to such conservatism of law and system would evince a special skill in guarding their national annals against loss, and against corruption of any kind. The obligation laid on the Hebrew parent in relation to everything national was in strict accordance with these characteristic facts. 'These words which I command 'thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt 'teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk 'of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when 'thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, 'and when thou risest up, and thou shalt bind them for 'a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them on the 'posts of thine house and on thy gates.'* It is not to be imagined that a nation whose social and religious life was of this complexion from the beginning, would be a

* Deut. vi. 6—9.

nation to become so ignorant of its own history as to allow the alleged scheme of fabrication to have been possible. For it must not be forgotten that this supposed falsification of Hebrew history was not to be a secret. What was done was done, it is said, to influence the people, and to influence the people it must have been proclaimed to them.

If it shall be seen that this story about Ezra and the finding of the book will not bear scrutiny, and if it be said that the men who dressed up the Pentateuch, and some later narratives, as we now have them, lived some three or four centuries earlier than the time of Josiah, the difficulty which has been stated will remain in full force. We say of that time, as of the later time, if these supposed fabricators were then at liberty to lie as they pleased, their mendacity, we feel assured, could never have come under influences disposing them to give us such narratives as have come to our hand. In that case, scarcely a feature of these records would have been such as we find it. These Hebrew Scriptures may contain a special revelation or they may not; but to me, one thing is clear, these writings must be accepted as being in their great substance historically truthful.

It should not be concluded, however, because the history of the Israelites presents signs of human weakness and depravity only too much in common with the history of other nations, that it must therefore be unreasonable to suppose that a special revelation from the Creator had been made to them. If not so free from the force of evil passions as they should have been, they were never without men among them, who, in enlightened piety, and in entire consecration to a religious life, had no counter-

part in the contemporary nations. Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, Asaph and Isaiah, Elijah and Daniel, are names which suggest high conceptions of humanity to the thoughtful. No men were so sensible to the irreligion and dissoluteness of their times as these men; and none were more convinced as to the reality of those communications which the God of their fathers was said to have made to his chosen people, or as to the reality of the religious life of which they were themselves such eminent examples.

It is significant and painful to mark the ingenuity with which some men endeavour to defend themselves against the necessity of submission to any authority beyond that of the light within them. Revelation seems to be, to their feeling, an intruder, an unbidden guest, from whose presence they wish to free themselves as speedily as possible.

Some men tell us that they take exception to the idea of a revelation as involving impossibility. Revelation, they say, must be an intervention of the supernatural; and the supernatural is impossible, inasmuch as the natural in creation is the effect of what is necessary in the Creator, and nothing contradictory can come from that source. 'The great oversight in this reasoning,' as I have said elsewhere, 'consists in a confounding of the 'distinction between *physical laws* and *moral laws*. That 'the distinctions between right and wrong come from the 'nature of the Deity, and that in respect to these the 'Divine Being may not do to-day the reverse of what he 'did yesterday—this we can understand. But a small 'measure of discernment should be sufficient to make it 'clear, that what may be thus said of the laws of moral

'order, is more than may be said concerning the disposi-
'tions and laws of matter. We are not prepared to believe
'that the ultimate end of the existing system will consist
'in anything merely physical, or in any set of relations
'between cause and effect in material things. We must
'suppose that the physical in general is designed to be
'the servant of the moral, no less certainly than that the
'body in man was designed to be the servant of the
'soul. Who can, in consequence, be competent to say to
'what extent it has been expedient, or may again become
'expedient, to subordinate the physical laws of the present
'system to moral ends? The original disposition and
'laws of matter might have been other than we find them.
'We have natural data enough to justify us in believing
'that in other worlds, even in our system, differences in
'this respect obtain. Now the being who might have
'disposed of matter and its relations differently at first,
'and who appears to have disposed them differently in
'different worlds, may surely be at liberty to dispose of
'them differently in some special instances in the same
'world, if there be a sufficient moral end requiring him to
'do so. This may be simply a revelation of the immuta-
'bility of the Divine purpose in seeking the highest ends
'by the best means, subordinating with this view the less
'to the greater, the material to the spiritual.'* My inten-
tion in this passage was to suggest that the sovereignty
of mind in man over matter should be accepted as a
faint image of the sovereignty of mind in the Deity over
it. Nature consists, as stated, in 'certain relations between
'cause and effect in material things.' Mind, whether in
man or in the Creator, is above nature, is properly the

* *The Age and Christianity*, chap. ii. 10.

supernatural. Nature does innumerable things under the action of human intelligence which it would never do apart from that intelligence, and who is to say what may not be done by the Divine intelligence in the same region? This is the idea which Dr. Bushnell has elaborated in his recent treatise on 'The Natural and Supernatural.' Moreover, though God changes not, creatures change, and change in the creature may necessitate some corresponding change in the conduct of the Creator.

It is further said, that an objective revelation is inadmissible so long as it is ceded that man possesses a subjective revelation in the light of his moral nature. To suppose this light sufficient, is to supersede the necessity of all further light. To suppose that it is not sufficient, and that an external revelation has come to supplement it, is to suppose that the Creator did his first work imperfectly, and has aimed to amend it by a second. By such a notion, it is said, we impeach both the skill and justice of the Deity.

But this favourite dilemma is not very formidable. It is a transcendental conception which overlooks the facts manifest in the actual condition of our nature. It takes no cognizance of the origin of evil, or of the possible effect of sin on the condition of the sinning. There are relations so simple and obvious that we may speak with confidence as to what God may or may not do in reference to them. But there are many more concerning which we must not thus speak without knowing more of the Divine nature than we now know, or than we are likely ever to know.

All the relations of sinful beings are, of course, powerfully affected by the fact of their sinfulness. Should

a revelation come to us, therefore, it comes to us not as God made us, but as sin has made us, and we may be sure that its ethics will be very different in their manifestations from the ethics we can imagine as pervading the universe in the absence of sin. Right, indeed, is right in all the possible conditions and relations of being, but the application of the principle of right must vary as those conditions and relations shall vary. The justice of God is the same whether manifested towards the innocent or the guilty. But the manifestations of justice may not be the same in the two cases. What it might have become the Divine Being to do towards sinful beings we could never have known had not sin been permitted to exist. It would be presumptuous enough were we to deem ourselves competent to distinguish in all cases between the ethically sound and the not sound in connections where evil should have no place. But to imagine ourselves capable of deciding thus concerning right and wrong in the conduct of the Divine Being towards the present world, would be, I scarcely need say, presumptuous to the last degree. The case is too complex. Its difficulties are too profound to be thoroughly analysed and fathomed by us. Truth, justice, goodness, mercy—these are terms about which we have no dispute. We do not need a revelation to enable us to apprehend such qualities or principles considered in themselves. But there has been ample room for the coming in of new light to determine what may or may not be done consistently with those principles in the relations in which we now stand to our fellow-creatures and to the Creator. The primary application of the principles of moral government must be supposed to have had respect to innocent

beings—the condition of being natural to creatures. The entrance of sin is the entrance of the unnatural. It has made man unnatural, the world unnatural. From sin all forms of the unnatural come, as from a common root. The application of the principle of moral government—especially if its aim be to restore the erring, and not simply to punish them—opens a new field in the history of the Divine administration. The fitting in such a case must be almost wholly a matter of Divine revelation, it can be scarcely at all a discovery of reason. As subjects, men have revolted. As children, they have become disobedient. As the effect of these changes, the Divine course of proceeding towards them must greatly change. If any abstract and transcendental idea might seem to be certain, it would be the idea that a universe governed by an infinitely good and an infinitely powerful being would be a universe without disorder, without sin. But we know that to think thus would be to think erroneously. And if in so thinking we should have erred, are we sure that there is any other point of a similar nature on which we may not err ?

On these grounds I see nothing in the assertion that revelation is impossible, nor anything in the assertion that it must be superfluous, to prevent my accepting the Bible as a revelation, should it be found to present fair credentials of being such.

In the existing state of things I can admit the light within man to be inadequate, and a further revelation to be needed, without at all impeaching the Divine wisdom, or the Divine rectitude. Supposing the light within to have been originally adequate, and supposing self-induced sin to have obscured it, the design of the Creator

in the supposed new and supplemental revelation may be, not to perfect his own work, but to repair the injury that has been done to it, and to make it equal to the new exigencies to which it has been subjected by its own free act.

The pretence that there is no such certainty in history or in language as would be required to render a written revelation effectual, is a modern fancy, deserving very little attention. It is an objection which proves nothing by proving too much. If writings supposed to contain a revelation must be of small value on this ground, then all writings contemporary with them must lose authority for the same reason. If human language be thus untrustworthy as having respect to religion, it is not easy to see how it should be trustworthy as having respect to anything beside. The past, according to this objection, must be hopelessly severed from the present. The common sense of mankind may be safely left to deal with such paradoxes. It is true, the internal revelation is always with us, but it would be easy to show that it is exposed to perversion and corruption in innumerable forms. For this reason, and many more, the written may hold out a far better promise of stability than the unwritten.

An objection much more plausible is that founded on the law of progress said to be natural to the history of society. It is accounted unreasonable to suppose that a number of men in remote time should have been deputed to settle so grave a matter as religion for the men of all time. Physical progress in these later ages has been wonderful. Its effect on general progress has been wonderful. And the thought that religious truth should

come to us stereotyped in this manner from the past, is deemed most unreasonable.

But the past has really settled a great deal more than some men seem to imagine. Our laws of taste, in literature and art, have come to us substantially from the past. Our psychology and our natural ethics have descended to us in the same manner. We have not gone much beyond the ancients in these things. We have not often risen to their level. May not the remote time when so much of this higher kind of truth was matured have been the time when religious truth was to be developed sufficiently for the purpose of this life? The human culture most cognate with religion was ripened then, and is it not possible that religion itself may then have taken a form sufficient to the wants of humanity? We are better chemists and better astronomers than the ancients, but, left to ourselves, should we have been better moralists? There is at least room to doubt on that point. May not the work assigned to the future have been that men should progress by securing Christianity against the corruptions to which it could not fail to be liable, and by rising to its true level? It may be that our modern world has much to do before it will come into possession of the latent wealth which will some day be found in this ancient mine of thought.

It is of some importance also to an intelligent enquiry as to the existence of a special revelation, to consider thoughtfully the limits which may be expected to restrict even such a communication, supposing it to be made. Much as we may expect it to reveal, it would be sure to leave much unrevealed. Its tendency must be rather to *abate* difficulty, than wholly to remove it. In every de-

partment of knowledge, what men know is little compared with what they do not know. We get our truth by glimpses, not by full manifestations. Our knowledge of the past is as nothing in comparison with our ignorance concerning it. Even of the present, how little do we know. The nearest wave is visible; the ocean of billows which stretch off beyond it we see not. The multitude are observant of appearances; the few only look to their causes, and even that few can travel but a little way in that direction. If the Being who has given existence to this universe, and who still rules it, shall speak to men, we may expect, from what we know of his ways, that the knowledge imparted will be limited, relating mainly to our immediate moral necessities, and that he will often be silent where we could have wished him to have been communicative. Should he employ men to write down his message, they will, no doubt, be men knowing where to stop, and will deliver themselves in a manner of their own. We should also bear in mind, that a necessary effect of the coming of new light on the path of man must be, not only to diminish the nearer darkness, but to make the more distant darkness visible. With us the known everywhere loses itself in the unknown. Our light always dies away into its opposite. All things have their mystery, so that to know more is to come more than ever face to face with the unknown. The existence of the Infinite must be an everlasting mystery to the finite. The creature may not comprehend the Creator. Hence comes the test of humility, and of loyal obedience, inseparable from the condition of created natures. What we need is to be saved from moral evil, not to be free from the motive to humility

suggested by the ceaseless presence of the mysterious. The perfection of creature-being must be found in the perfection of trust, notwithstanding the line which must separate for ever between the things we apprehend, and those we cannot penetrate.

If we suppose a revelation to be made to the world at all, we think we see reasons why it should be made early. If the mystery of sin was to be explained and counteracted, it was expedient that this explanation and counteraction should date from the time when that mystery began to work. But it could hardly have commenced with the young, inexperienced, and comparatively rude nations of the ancient world, without being materially affected by that fact. To be addressed effectually to the people of those times, it must be adapted largely to their forms of thought, and their condition generally. If we suppose a people to be separated by the Supreme Being to his special service in those regions, and in those remote ages, with which the history of the Israelites is connected, many of the features of that history which may startle the superficial among ourselves are really features of the kind likely to become blended with a revelation so communicated. Those minutiæ in ritual, for example, which are often thought to have been so little worthy of a Divine appointment, are a religious feature never absent from the history of an Asiatic community, either in ancient or modern times. The presumption accordingly was, that this tendency of the Oriental mind would not be overlooked in the case of the Israelites, but would be used to religious ends. The Asiatic man is the workmanship of the Almighty, and this is one of the qualities of that workmanship. What

marvel, then, if the Creator is found training this tendency to a devout purpose in the case of his favourite people. Hence, had the book of Leviticus been wanting in Hebrew history, one great evidence of its being what it claimed to be would have been wanting.

The same may be said concerning the theocratic character of the Hebrew government. All the old Oriental governments, especially the most developed and potent among them, were theocratic. The division of the people into castes, and the rights which each caste might plead on religious grounds in its defence, were all marked out and settled by a supposed Divine ordination. Whether on the banks of the Nile, of the Euphrates, or of the Ganges, this was the form which law, and the administration of law, always took. The Eastern mind has come from the hand of the Creator with this mould upon it, and nothing could be more natural than that the Hebrew legislation should have been of this type. The modern Deist may repudiate the Jehovah of the Hebrews because revealed after this manner. But had he been an ancient Asiatic he must have submitted to such a deity or to none.

That the Creator should be the parent of a race of creatures so conditioned as to need an education and discipline of this description may be a great mystery. But the case being so, it is no mystery that the Infinite should condescend to minister in this manner to the necessities which he has himself permitted. The exception here, accordingly, cannot lie against the Hebrew revelation. It must lie elsewhere. It is an impeachment of natural theology. The reader who overlooks this truth in the study of the Pentateuch will never rightly appre-

hend it. The voice from God which some men seem to think should come to us through the writings of Moses, is a voice which it is unreasonable to expect from any Asiatic source in those far-off times. In those circumstances, men might refuse to believe in Moses; but to affect to believe elsewhere was to be beset with the same difficulties, and more.

We have heard much of late concerning the 'Education of the World.' It is deemed philosophical to regard the intelligence of the race as passing through its stages of childhood and youth towards manhood. If we suppose the Pentateuch to possess any sort of authority, it surely stands related to a time which must be regarded as presenting a very immature and early stage in this process of training. Education supposes ignorance to be removed, weakness to be strengthened, growth to be realised. In the case of the individual it is a thing of slowness. What marvel if this process be found slow, very slow, in the case of a world? Here it is a world-ignorance that has to be removed, a world-weakness that has to be strengthened, and a world-growth that has to be realised; and, while the individual pupil soon dies, this world pupil lives through all the ages. Hence the history of the Israelites is only an instance illustrating a general law. In the history of this people, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and long afterwards, we see a nation in its youth, with signs enough upon it of the ignorance, the rashness, the self-will, and the outbursts of appetite and passion natural to youth. It may seem strange and sad that human nature should come before us in their instance, as in other connections, in a state to need so much mending. But it does so come beyond a doubt,

whatever may be the issue of the question concerning a Divine revelation; and we think it should not be accounted strange that the Divine Being should be found doing much to carry on this mending process. His work in Israel was to educate, and Moses was his great schoolmaster.

But this untaught rudeness in the history of nations everywhere supposes the presence of rigour—rigour in law, and rigour in the administration of law. The rose-water policy which some modern sentimentalists think the only good policy, can have small place in such communities. The coarseness and turbulence abroad are not to be adequately met by any legislation of that order. When communities are in that stage, the want of rigour would be the want of humanity. What may be wise in one set of social relations, would be unwise in another. Moreover, where national law is thus harsh and strong-handed, international law is sure to partake of the same temper. Considerations of this nature should prepare us to expect much, very much, in the laws and manners of the Israelites, differing widely from our own; and no mind should approach the study of the Pentateuch without a careful remembrance of such facts as we have glanced at.

Revelation, we have said, may be stationary while society is progressive. But it is important to remember, that according to the teaching of the Bible, revelation has been progressive through at least two-thirds of the world's history. It begins with Genesis, and the entrance of sin. It ends with the Apocalypse. Through that interval of four thousand years its course is a course of development. It is one from the beginning. The ripened fruit

comes from the germ, and is identical with it. Moses did not give religion to the men of his race: he only gave them laws concerning it. The religion existed long before.

Now I know of nothing in the history of the world presenting so significant an indication of a presiding mind, prosecuting its purpose undisturbed by the passing away of generations and centuries, as is given in this fact. This one purpose is to set forth an objective religious faith, to expand it, to make it more clear and more nearly complete as the world becomes more educated, and needing further light. The later writers in the Old Testament supplement the earlier. Christianity is the maturity of Judaism. All kinds of revolutions take place during those four thousand years. Rude nations become civilised. Small nations become great races, migrate, and found states and empires. The wheel of change rolls on, and the potent of to-day become the weak, the prostrate, and the crushed of to-morrow. The splendours of Asiatic empires wax and wane, and die out in long succession. But amidst all this change, the religious truth in this alleged revelation which sufficed to make men devout before the flood, still so affects them. The faith thus old does not decay, but becomes more clear in its enunciations, more subduing in its power. I know of nothing like this in human affairs. Many are the devices of humanity, and the world is ever changing under their influence. But here is a line of things not to be so controlled, a track along which we see a changeless purpose in action, while all beside it is ever changing. Where is there a parallel to this in modern history? To find its counterpart, we must go to physical law, the

law which makes the earth stable, and the action of the heavens sure, through all time. Through these laws we come face to face with the Immutable. We feel, as we contemplate them, that we are in His presence. And should we not so feel as we mark the continuity of purpose which pervades the teaching of the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures?

Beyond this, we have to remember that the authors of these writings are some forty in number; men living sometimes contemporaneously, more often as links in a chain; men of every grade in culture, from the lowest to the highest; and men of tastes, pursuits, and habits in life, wonderfully diverse. Still they are all one in the truths they utter, in the tale they tell. While some two score of men have been employed to give us these writings, the pieces transmitted to us from their pens are greatly more numerous, varying in extent from a brief letter to a treatise or a history; and varying as compositions, from prose of nearly every description, to poetry not less diversified. Through all this variety there runs the same spirit of unity. The writers are often unconscious as to the ultimate object to be secured by their writing, but a power above themselves determines their utterances.

When we consider all these facts, the presumption becomes strong, that in this book we have the signs of His presence who changeth not. That the writings of the Old Testament, as we now possess them, are not free from error, will be admitted by every scholar. Supposing them to have been originally inspired, we are not obliged to suppose that they have escaped injury from the accidents of transmission. Only a perpetual miracle, if I may use such an expression, could have so guarded them.

But the blemishes of this nature are few. They leave the great substance untouched. The character of God; the condition of man; his relations to his Maker and to a future life, are here explicitly set forth. If these announcements are not a revelation, then we have none. And with no intelligible relation to a hereafter, what an enigma is man! His thoughts are busied with the questions of good and evil. His aspirations ascend above the visible and the finite. He can apprehend the high condition of being of which his nature is capable. But concerning this life only has he certainty. The life to come is all conjecture, more or less plausible. He is conscious that his nature is disordered, dwarfed, defiled by sin, but as to any way of rising above this abortive existence—of that he has no consciousness. Can it be that his Creator has made him capable of a destiny so high, and doomed him everywhere to a condition so low? Must all that is great within him prove no more than a mockery of greatness, ever telling him what he *might* be, never telling him what he *shall* be?

To believe that is beyond my power. I find it more easy—immeasurably more easy—to believe that the Divine Being has spoken through Moses, than to suppose that he has left the world wholly without any supernatural communication. Small and great are for us—not for Him. He is not ashamed of His own works. He is not disposed to be unmindful of them. What it was not beneath His dignity to create, it can never be beneath His dignity to care for. There are other conclusions in relation to Him to which I feel prompted by the intuitions of my nature — a nature which I must have received from Him. Let it appear therefore that He did

speak to the ancient world, and that He still speaks to us, through Moses and the prophets, and I can credit that fact. I know of no source of knowledge that may not be said to be in harmony with it.

The exceptions taken to the claims of the Old Testament may present some occasional difficulty, but it is light if compared with the difficulty to be met if those claims are neglected. The historical evidence in favour of those records is such that assault upon them in that form falls powerless before it. And its moral evidence —the evidence arising from its religious elements, as compared with anything of the kind to be found elsewhere—is still stronger. I see religious character inspired and moulded by its spiritual tendencies after a manner which has its place apart, and is wonderfully significant. Its sublime theism is not a refined speculation restricted to the schools of philosophy. It becomes the poor man's faith, and hope, and gladness. In brief, if the piety of these Hebrews is not all that we can imagine piety should be, it is the nearest approximation towards it of anything that has come down to us from those remote ages. And were the Hebrews a people likely to have elicited principles thus enlightened, or to have realised aspirations thus pure, had they been left to themselves? The presumption is strong that where the good is—is eminently, there the true is—is eminently.

It is admitted that all men have not this revelation as we possess it. But it is not easy to say how far the religious ideas of the world at large have been influenced by this primitive faith. The known religious institutions of the past go back for the most part to the world's youth; and the truer portion of the religious conceptions

associated with those institutions are not less ancient. Moreover, it is not a law of the Divine government, as recognised by Christian or Deist, that a good conferred anywhere must be a good conferred everywhere, while revelation itself assures us that men will be judged at last according to the light they have and not according to that they have not. The God of the Pantheist or of the Deist throws no light on human destiny—leaves it all dark—dark—dark! This cannot be said of the God of the Christian. The God of the Deist has permitted sin —has let in all the astounding elements of discord by which we are encircled, and having done this, his whole work, so far as we can see, is done! But the God of revelation is a Being prepared to bring good out of this permitted evil, and to make the discipline arising from contact with it the means of raising us above it, completely and for eve

SECTION III.

REVELATION.

The New Testament.

WE have seen that in early Hebrew history there is internal evidence enough to show that it should be accepted as being generally truthful. Nine-tenths of the incidents recorded are such as it would never have entered into the mind of a fabricator to invent, and such as a faithful historian only would have committed to writing. So simple, and so true to nature, is the narrative in its great substance, as to justify the conclusion that such portions of the story as rise to the supernatural would not have been found therein, had not the events described been realities. Such manifestly artless and veracious pictures of personal, domestic, and national life suffice to shut out all idea of myth or invention, and lead us to conclude, that if we find these homely and ordinary descriptions allied with the extraordinary, it must be because the two have grown together. The result is obvious. If the history, in the natural portions of it, has such an air of veracity as to compel our belief in it; and if the

supernatural becomes, in this view, so credible as to be all but irresistible, the issue then is, that the revelation which these writings are said to have brought to us must, to say the least, be entitled to the gravest consideration. The grounds on which some men reject this revelation we have in part examined, and have found them invalid; and the complexion of the evidence on which believers accept those ancient writings as being what they claim to be has been indicated. My firm belief is, that the Divine Being did speak to men in those early ages by Moses and the prophets. Has he spoken to us since by Jesus Christ? This is the next question in our course of enquiry.

Of the evidence placed in our hands on this subject, the most direct, unexceptionable, and convincing is that presented in the epistles of St. Paul. No critic of the sceptical school has ever attempted to cast a suspicion on the genuineness or authenticity of the epistle to the Romans, the two epistles to the Corinthians, or the epistle to the Galatians. Among the most unquestioned and unsuspected documents in ancient literature, there are none that are more certainly what they claim to be than are the four above-mentioned. What then is the character and history of Paul as thus placed before us?

We find in Paul, as a man, every element of character that could contribute to make his testimony weighty and trustworthy. He was a strong man by nature, and a strong man by culture. He was also a sincere man, unmistakably such, whether as persecutor or preacher. Looked at largely, he may be taken as an extraordinary specimen of man—of the fully developed man. The range of his intellect, as seen in his writings,

is vast; and while so comprehensive, it is marvellously thorough and discriminating, and so suggestive as to fill his teaching, while addressed to that time, with large prophecy for all time. Nor is this all. While the sweep and discipline of his intelligence were of this order, he was a man of deep, earnest, and tender feeling. He possessed high moral courage. He could withstand Peter to the face when he knew he was to blame. He could acquit himself with a manly dignity before kings. He could front wild beasts at Ephesus; could lay his account with bonds and imprisonments as everywhere awaiting him, and with martyrdom at the last, and could bear at the same time with weaknesses almost without limit, in those whose spiritual interests were dear to him, could weep with their suffering as a mother weeps over her sick offspring, and could cherish life in the spiritually feeble as a 'nurse cherisheth her children.' Take him for all in all, I know not where to look for the same fullness of manhood as was evidently in this man. One man may say that much learning has made him mad. Another may say that his propagandist life was a course to which only a fanatic could have committed himself. But to the competent and candid enquirer, it must be manifest that if ever a man knew how to concern himself with learning without being misled by it, and how to be zealous with a martyr's zeal, and still to regulate all his ways by a finely balanced rationality, that man was the Apostle Paul. Had he been much more a reasoning man than he was, there would have been danger of his becoming enamoured of curious and difficult questions, and living in a region of speculative refinements, he might have been little capable of

discharging the more robust duties of life. On the other hand, had he been much more a man of feeling than he was, he might have become an enthusiast, and the force of his nature might have spent itself to little purpose, from the want of being more wisely directed.

What then is the testimony of this man, so little likely to be found among deceivers or deceived, concerning Christianity? In the first epistle to the Corinthians, he says: 'I delivered unto you first of all that 'which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins 'according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and 'that he rose again the third day according to the scrip-'tures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the 'twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred 'brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto 'this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he 'was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last 'of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due 'time.' * From this statement, it would appear that the Saviour was seen twice after his resurrection by the twelve; and this fact we may be sure the apostle had learnt from Peter and John, and other of the apostles, whom he had known long since in Jerusalem and elsewhere. James he well knew, and the fact stated concerning him he had no doubt learnt from his own lips. So the appearance to the five hundred brethren, we may safely conclude, had become known to him from the testimony of many of their number still living. Next come the words, 'And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time.' Seen of me, as he was seen of them—his language can mean nothing less.

* C. xv. 3—8.

Further—in another chapter of this epistle, the apostle writes, 'Am I not an apostle; *have I not seen Jesus* '*Christ our Lord?*'*

So we have in Paul an eye-witness to the fact of our Lord's resurrection; and we have through him depositions to that fact from others who were also eye-witnesses. Beyond this, the apostle is most explicit in affirming that he had himself the power of working miracles, and that a power of that nature was among the gifts then largely present with the Church. In his epistle to the Romans, he writes: 'I will not dare to speak of any of 'those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to 'make the Gentiles obedient in word and deed, *through* '*mighty signs and wonders*, by power of the spirit of God.'† In the first epistle to the Corinthians we have the words following: 'For to one is given by the spirit the word 'of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the 'same spirit; to another faith by the same spirit; to 'another the *gifts of healing* by the same spirit; to another 'the *working of miracles*; to another divers kinds of '*tongues*.' 'And God hath set some in the Church; first, 'apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after 'that miracles, the gifts of healings, helps, governments, 'diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all 'prophets? Are all teachers? Are all *workers of mi-* 'racles? Have all the *gifts of healing*? Do all *speak* '*with tongues*? Do all *interpret*?'‡ Further on, the apostle says, 'I thank my God that *I speak with tongues* more 'than ye all.'§ In his second epistle to the same church he says, 'Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought

* C. ix. 1.
† C. xv. 18, 19.
‡ C. xii. 8—10, 28—30.
§ C. xiv. 18.

among you in all patience, *in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*'* Beyond all this, the apostle asserts that the doctrine he published through the world, as being Christian, was a doctrine which he had not learnt in any way from the other apostles, or from those who had become Christians before him, but that it had come to him wholly by the revelation of Jesus Christ.†

Here is a wide range of the supernatural to be dealt with. If the apostle had warrant to say that he had 'seen the Lord;' that miracles were among the conspicuous gifts of the church; and that the Gospel which he preached and committed to writing consisted of truths which had become his by special revelation—then the Divine origin of Christianity is settled. How this evidence is to be set aside I see not. Surely Paul was not a man to deceive, to lie, to blaspheme, and all under the show of extraordinary sanctity, under the pretence of a Divine commission. PAUL do *that*! The man who could regard him as capable of so doing must be a man not to be reasoned with. What had the apostle to gain by such a course? On the contrary, was there any form of privation or suffering, or any kind of death, to which he may not be said to have exposed himself by pursuing it? Hear how he speaks as to what befell himself and others as engaged in this work. 'I think that God hath 'set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to 'death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and 'to angels, and to men—even unto the present hour we 'both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, 'and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working

* 2 Cor. xii. 12. † Galatians i.

'with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being per-
'secuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are
'made the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all
'things unto this day.'* In the second epistle to this same church, the apostle speaks of himself and his brethren as approving themselves in all things ministers of God, 'in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, 'in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in 'labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by 'knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy 'Ghost, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand 'and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report 'and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, 'and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as 'chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always re-'joicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having no-'thing, and yet possessing all things. O, ye Corinthians, 'our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged!'† In the eleventh chapter he returns to this subject, with a more direct reference to himself. The apostle had been made aware that he had rivals in the field at Corinth, boastful men, who forced him, much against his will, to be somewhat boastful in return. 'Are they Hebrews? 'So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the 'seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of 'Christ? (I speak as a fool). I am more; in labours 'more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons 'more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times 'received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten 'with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered ship-

* 1 Cor. iv. † 2 Cor. vi.

'wreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in 'journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, 'in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the 'heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, 'in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in 'weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger 'and thirst, in fastings often, in cold, and nakedness; 'beside those things that are without, that which cometh 'upon me daily, the care of all the churches.' We learn from this instructive passage that the narrative in the Acts gives us but a small part of the hard experiences which fell to the lot of the apostle as a preacher of the Gospel. Imagine a man taking a position in modern society that should expose him to such outbursts of scorn and hate, and imagine him facing all this in unabated continuity through a whole life, the elements, in common with human passions, being often apparently marshalled against him; and then say—can this be the history of a man seeking selfish ends through imposture and fraud? Verily the fruit of the adventure must soon have sufficed to bring it to a close. Saul, as a pupil of Gamaliel, was ambitious of social distinction, and he had only to pursue the paths through which distinction was ordinarily attainable to realise his object. What a contrast might be drawn between the possible Saul of Sanhedrim celebrity, and the actual Paul as a leader of the loathed sect of the Nazarenes! We have evidence enough that the apostle was quite capable of looking on this picture and on that. But in the full apprehension of both he does not waver—does not bate a jot of heart or hope in prosecuting his great spiritual mission. We say of all the apostles—so near akin were their lives

—that they could not have been deceivers. We say this eminently of Paul. It only remains accordingly to ask—could this man have been deceived? Was it possible that he should have persuaded himself that he had 'seen the Lord' when he had not; that he had lived in a region of miracles, and had wrought miracles, when he had not; and that he should have imagined that the doctrine which he published so independently and freely through the cities and provinces of the Roman empire had come to him by special revelation, when it had not?

Of all the men who have spoken to us through the pages of the Old and New Testaments, Paul is the man in whose case self-deception was the most clearly impossible. The Oriental intellect is not logical. Its faculty is to a high degree intuitive; it reasons, but it rarely ever does so formally. It passes to its conclusions with a subtle celerity, resembling what we see in women, much more than by those scientific processes which are familiar to our Western habits of thought. Hence its lessons come to us as they do—in fragments of history and biography, in poetry or proverbs, more than in regular discourse of any kind. From this cause the general manner of the sacred writers is positive, dogmatic; they assert, they do not often attempt to prove. With Paul it was not thus; his intellect was more European than Asiatic; his mission was to bridge over the distance between the idiosyncrasies of the two races—the East and West. This was one of his eminent qualifications to become the Apostle of the Gentiles. What other apostle could have written the epistle to the Romans? At the same time, who among them could have shown the

delicate and wide range of practical wisdom observable in the epistles to the Corinthians? The ardour of the apostle's religious zeal was great, but it is always curbed and governed by a commanding intelligence. We scarcely know which to admire the most, the fervour with which he stimulates the thought and affection of those who come under his influence, or the large common sense, and nice discrimination, with which he guards them against illusion, and against extravagance in any form. The manner in which he presents his evidence concerning the resurrection of our Lord, when writing to the Corinthians; and the sequence and precision with which he sets forth his position, when presenting the scheme of human redemption to the mind of the Romans, are wonderfully adapted to meet the demands of European thought. It is just in such a manner that the admirers of Aristotle and Cicero would need to be addressed if they were to be convinced.

Have we not in all this the guarantee we seek? Is it not clear that Paul was a man who could not have been deceived in regard to his alleged supernatural experiences? What he says concerning his ascent into the third heavens is said obscurely. There is a haze about it which precludes our deducing any very definite conclusion from it.* But the assertion that he had seen the Lord has no haze upon it; the texts in which he speaks of miracles as wrought in his time, and as wrought by himself, show no trace of obscurity; and the declaration that his gospel had become his, not by human teaching, but purely by Divine illumination,—all this is so much simple fact, or it is nothing. The

* 2 Cor. xii.

apostle assures us that these are facts, facts of which he has a certain knowledge, and that, under the influence of this knowledge concerning his divine Lord, he had learnt to count it a small thing to do so much, to endure so much, and to dare so much in his cause. Where then is there room for doubt? I see none. I feel bound to accept the words of Paul in their clear meaning, and in doing so I find myself shut up to faith in Christ. I can suppose all other evidence gone—this alone to stand. But so long as this shall remain, so long I must be a Christian. The assailants of Christianity often flatter themselves that if some one line of defence may be demolished, or if only another or another may be pénetrated, their expected victory must come. Let them not deceive themselves. In this last dyke, if it were possible the Christian advocate should be driven to it, he might take his stand side by side with Paul, and hold the enemy at bay through all time.

Let it be observed, in passing, that this evidence comes to us in writing, in a 'book;' that it could not have come to us in any other way; and that it comes to us thus decisively in this way.

But if the evidence supplied by the life of Paul is of this decisive complexion, there is One whose history is fraught with evidence of a still higher order. The Lord whom the apostle had seen after death lived ceaselessly in his memory, in his imagination, and in his heart. Beautiful is the vision which was thus always present with him. The name of that Holy One seems to be ever flowing from his lips or from his pen, and always as awakening a new feeling of reverence and love. Everything great and pure in truth and goodness, was com-

prehended in that name. It descends as a halo about everything Christian,—is diffused as an aroma through its whole substance. The Apostle had nothing holy or elevated in himself which he did not attribute to his Lord. So of the churches. Earth and heaven, the present and the future, were all seen in their relations to Christ, were full of Him, and derived their significance and interest from Him. So it is with the other apostles. In this respect, Peter and John are one in spirit with their brother Paul. In common, they seem to want words in which to express their sense of the spiritual beauty and celestial greatness of the Saviour. His presence still meets their vision, his words still sound in their ears. The mysterious power of his loving heart still vibrates through their own heart. And they preach Him everywhere with a firm persuasion that as men come to know the story of his life, they will become devoted to Him after the same manner. Nor were they in error in this anticipation. The Christ of the primitive church was the Christ presented by Peter, and Paul, and John, in their epistles.

We look naturally from this great fact to its cause. How came these good men to be possessed with these ideas concerning Christ, and to be governed by this strength of affection in relation to Him? Peter and John we know spoke of Jesus as they had found Him during his ministry. Paul knew Him by special means, and in part from the ordinary sources. On the whole, the conclusion must be, that in the Christ of the epistles, we have the living Christ whom the authors of those epistles had possessed sufficient means of knowing. The testimony of Peter and John was to what they had 'seen and

heard,' and that of Paul, as we have seen, is not less worthy of acceptance.

The question now comes—Is the Christ of the Gospels in harmony with the Christ of the Epistles? Inasmuch as the first three of those narratives all suppose Jerusalem to be still existing, they must have been written within less than forty years after the death of our Lord. Their date may be safely fixed at about thirty years after that event. In the fuller presentation of the character of Christ in these memoirs, we see clearly the origin of the views concerning him which had taken possession of the mind of the apostles long before, and which had been common to the first preachers of the Gospel, and to the first Christians generally during that interval. The matters recorded in these Gospels, and much of the same kind not found there, had been treasured up by believers during the past thirty years, either orally or otherwise, and, in ways which can be easily imagined, had given form to Christian thought. From the study of the character of Christ in the Epistles, we naturally wish to know more of his life. From the facts reviewed two conclusions are certain: first, that any trustworthy account of the life of Christ will be sure to assign to him a transcendent goodness and greatness: and secondly, these high personal qualities will be sure to be associated with the exercise of supernatural powers. If we suppose Peter, or John, or Paul, to become evangelists, it is abundantly clear that the Christ of their narratives would be a Christ of this order. Such we see was the Christ whom they preached for the space of a generation after his death, and such is the Christ before us in their

epistles, nearly the whole of which were written towards the close of that interval.

Now the first three Gospels are manifestly of about the same date with the most important of the Epistles—that is, they came into existence about thirty years after the Crucifixion. The full record found in them all concerning our Lord's prophecy as to the coming destruction of Jerusalem presents that city as still existing. Had that prophecy been fulfilled, had the world, and especially the Jewish world, been recently startled and agonised by that terrible and predicted tragedy, it is impossible to suppose that the evangelists could have failed to give large prominence to the fact. But in thirty-seven years after the death of Christ this memorable fulfilment of his prophecy came to pass. We are warranted, therefore, in affirming, and without the least hesitancy, that the first three Gospels must have been in existence some time before that event—that is, in about thirty years after the ascension of our Lord. It is true, John's Gospel was not written until some eight or ten years after the fall of Jerusalem, and this Evangelist is silent on that event. But it is to be observed, first, that John's Gospel was not written for the purpose of taking up everything that it might be useful to record, but rather to supplement the information which had become sufficiently familiar to Christians from other sources; secondly, that the fall of the city and temple, signal as the catastrophe was at the time, in the course of years had come to be much less in men's thoughts, and had gradually dropped into its place in history; thirdly, that John does not mention the prophecy of Christ concerning that event, and in consequence is naturally silent as to its fulfilment.

What then is the character of Christ presented in the Gospels? It is strictly such as might have been expected. It is the Christ we find in the Epistles, and in the teaching of the first preachers of the Gospel. Christianity indeed is more fully developed in the Epistles than in the Gospels. But the germ of everything found in the preaching of the apostles is found in the teaching of Christ. Development simply means growth. It is not at variance with identity, but always supposes it. The Christ and the Christianity of Paul's epistles we know, and in the selections made from memory, and from authentic sources, by the compilers of the Gospels, we see the strict accordance between the character of Christ and the doctrine of Christ as given by the evangelists, and as preached by the Apostle of the gentiles. How the great Christian community in those days came to think of Jesus Christ and of his mission as they did is thus made plain. The teaching made familiar to them from the beginning had been such as could not fail to mould their thought into that type. It is confessed on all hands that the reverence and affection manifested by the early Christians for Christ were deep and ardent. It is admitted that there must have been some wonderful charm about him, or he would not have been described by his followers in the language commonly employed by them in relation to him. No gospel that should have spoken in lower terms concerning his nature, or his errand, could have found acceptance in the age of Paul and John.

So too in regard to miracles; if the Gospels had not described Jesus as exercising such power, such an omission would have been enough in itself to have destroyed

their claim to credibility. We know from men who witnessed his deeds, and from men who wrought miracles in his name, that his steps were marked by the signs and wonders which God did by Him. In the miracles of the Gospels accordingly, we see facts, which, in place of being felt as difficulties, should be accepted as evidence in favour of the truthfulness of those records.

We are told, indeed, that the life of Jesus did not really embrace anything supernatural, but that the feeling of the authors of the Gospels towards him allowed them to cluster all sorts of legendary marvels on the simple thread of history, so that it is now by no means easy to distinguish between the fiction and the fact. But if the date of the Gospels was such as we have shown it to have been, this system of fabrication was simply impossible. Men who had been companions of our Lord were still living, who could at once have exposed the fraud, if fraud it had been. Multitudes were then alive who knew enough of the life of Christ to qualify them for laying bare the error of such representations if they had been erroneous. For these reasons we feel that we have a right to say that the whole conception about the early Christians as being persons who gave themselves to such inventions is an unwarranted conception. It scarcely need be said that the apostles were not men to descend to a vice of that sort—men who were persuaded that to do evil that good might come was to merit damnation.* As little were they men to stand by and to allow others to become thus vicious without rebuke and exposure. Had the Christians of the apostolic age

* Rom. iii. 8.

been persons everywhere employed in overlaying the real life of Christ with stories tending to falsify its entire character, should we not have found Paul, and Peter, and John denouncing such offenders in terms proper to the enormity of their offence. Weighty are the censures which they pronounce on not a few of their contemporaries, but it is observable that this kind of censure is not among them. The reason is obvious, the apostles knew that the treasured traditions among the Christian people of their time concerning the greatness of their Lord, and the miracles wrought by him, were substantially true; and were traditions moreover in harmony with their own teaching." The four epistles of Paul before-mentioned demonstrate what the Christianity of the early church really was, and the testimony of the gospels is simply that of a second witness to the same order of facts.

The notion that the Gospels were compiled by some unknown hands, who were prepared to deal largely in the fabulous, and to adopt it still more largely from others, is utterly untenable. Established facts are fatal to that odious theory. The supernatural cannot be extruded from the Gospels while it is so strong in the Epistles. We have seen that the New Testament covers the first thirty years after the Crucifixion, and the New Testament knows nothing of Christianity as a form of Naturalism—it is everywhere the utterance of a dispensation full of the supernatural. To suppose that Christianity was at first a simply natural order of things, and that it became charged upon this scale with the supernatural so soon afterwards, is to attribute huge fraud and mendacity, not merely to the feeling of the multitude in that age,

but to the apostles themselves, for clearly they must all have been parties to the supposed deception. *They* at least knew the truth, and according to this scheme must have been the foremost men in corrupting it. Paul especially must have been a grand delinquent in this direction. The theory which carries such results along with it may be safely left to the judgment of the reader.

Here I might end. But the great miracle of Christianity is Christ himself. It will be well to consider carefully the manner in which he is presented to us by the evangelists, and to endeavour to realise a just conception of his character as it thus comes before us.

Some minds may find it difficult to suppose that the life of a person of such extraordinary pretensions should have been left to become known to us by the aid of historians possessing so little of the literary culture, or philosophical thought, which we are disposed to regard as necessary for the efficient discharge of a trust of this nature. Supposing the claims of Jesus to have been real, some of the foremost spirits of the age, it may be thought, would assuredly have been called to the responsible office of recording such a life for the benefit of the unborn races of men. But this may be only one amidst many points on which 'the foolishness 'of God is wiser than men.'

It is easy to imagine that the object of a divine revelation would be, to put honour upon moral, rather than upon intellectual greatness; to elevate the low, rather than to minister new fuel to the pride of those who were far above them. It should not be difficult for us to conceive that with God the highest form of greatness must be goodness. The most potent intellects, when allied

with goodness, can readily believe that the case may so be. The disposition in men to be worshippers of mere power, is a form of spiritual wickedness to which any communication from the Infinite to this world would be sure to be conspicuously opposed. In that wickedness we see the essence of the Satanic. In its opposite we see the essence of the Divine. For these reasons: supposing the Son of God to come to the earth, it is easy to imagine that his character would not be in the type of an artificial greatness, but in that of the naturally wise and good. His mind would not be a mind made effective by school training, or one conforming itself at all to the ways induced by such training. In such a case, we might expect that more than any conceivable art could have accomplished, would be achieved without art. Hence should the early disciples of Christ, and even the men employed to give us the story of his life, be good men and little more, there should not be much in that circumstance to fill us with surprise.

But more than this may be said. The fact that the evangelists were men who were not likely to attempt anything beyond giving us a simple record of what was said and done by their Lord, was a circumstance which eminently fitted them for their task. Had the life of Christ come to us in the usual biographical form, the narrative directly concerning himself being interspersed with criticisms and speculations or reflections from his biographers, in that case, the character of artless simplicity and truthfulness which now pervades those narratives would have been wholly lost. I cannot imagine the sort of life that might have descended to us in this form, the human ever thrusting itself into place side by

side with the divine, without a sense of pain which becomes almost physical. My blood is disturbed by the thought of it. No—however the evangelists came to be the sort of men we find them, clear it is, that nothing was further from their lowly, loving, reverential spirit, than the thought of placing themselves between their readers and their Lord. Everywhere it is their Lord who speaks and acts, not themselves. We always see them dropping into the shadow of their Master—out of sight. The naturalness, simplicity, and delicacy with which they pursue this course—not one, but all—is inimitable, and such as minds of their order could never have been trained to except by divine teaching. They knew well that they had no new light to bring to teaching which was so bright in its own light, no new beauty to add to deeds which were in themselves so beautiful.

From this character of the evangelists it has followed that the Christ seen in their pages is not a Christ described by any genius on their part, but a Christ self-revealed—self-delineated. What we all wish to know—to know beyond anything—is, what Christ really said and did; and to this the evangelists restrict themselves with a marvellous persistency. The result is, that the character of Christ discloses itself in the Gospels slowly, imperceptibly, without straining or noise of any kind. It does its work on the devout spirit like one of the great forces of nature, so gradually and silently, that the soul is hardly conscious of the transition through which it is passing. Every new miracle has its new character and circumstances, ever revealing something new to the man of true spiritual discernment. Every new discourse or parable comes as a new illumination on

a path which is ever brightening to those who walk in it.

How sensible we become at every step to the distance which separates between Christ and his disciples. In them we see, with remarkable truthfulness, what men of such a character might be expected to become under such influences. They are changed men—greatly changed, but they retain much to remind us of what they had been. They learn—but how slowly! They have some noble qualities, but how much imperfection, weakness! And those shortcomings in their course, they record with a simplicity and fidelity which we can understand only as we remember whose disciples they were. Their holy fear of the Master whom they followed, as one who knew them as they could not know themselves, explains this frankness of confession, and much more.

But while they depict themselves as far from perfect, it is not so that they depict Him to whom they did homage as the Christ, the Son of God. They are themselves open to surprises of all kinds. He is never surprised. They are readily disturbed by fear or anger. He never fears. In Him there is no passion which is not under the control of a wise intelligence. In His most terrible denunciations, there is a grave self-possession in his tone and bearing which belongs to Him and to no other. His disciples often err, and have to bear rebuke in doing so. He never errs; never recalls his words; never retraces his steps. He speaks concerning himself, his nature, his authority, and his power in extraordinary language, such as from other lips would be construed as blasphemy; but the general impression is, that, notwithstanding his use of these high forms of speech, he is really

modest, meek, and lowly, and that in some sense even such language must be in place as uttered by him. His great demand is that men should love himself. In that affection he recognises the germ and security of all goodness. The men about him are in extremes on the right and left. He avoids their mistakes on either hand, and he gives forth the truth, free from their falsehood, in the fewest and fittest words. It seems to be his nature to be wise—to know where to stop. He can expose superstition without giving the smallest license to irreligion—'this ought ye to have done, and not to have left the 'other undone.' He can chide down worldliness, and yet preach about the world as being full of God and of his gifts. He can inculcate severe maxims of self-government, and still can himself be present at wedding gatherings and at household feasts. He can deal with the most difficult questions in morals, but he always does so after a directly natural manner of his own, never after the scientific manner of the schools. His themes are often of the most elevated and mysterious description; but they never seem to be mysterious to him. Nothing is more remarkable than the readiness and decision with which he expresses himself on such subjects, unless it be the simplicity of the language and illustrations employed by him even in such connections. He is the friend of the poor—proclaims himself as such—still no man can charge him with being an enemy to the rich. Hence the opulent, in common with the necessitous, could look to him as willing to do them kind offices. The object of his mission is very precious to him, but he can be patient and wait, and with a wonderful calmness he can leave either suffering or success to

come in their season. He is possessed of supernatural power. But a restraint is laid upon its exercise which only a Divine intelligence and goodness could have imposed. It is a power put forth for others, not for himself, and always in pity, never in displeasure. With authority that might command anything, he is content to be hungry, thirsty, weary, and homeless. With legions of angels ready to obey his call, he allows men to lay their rude hands upon him, to subject him to shame, tortures, and death. The Christ of Matthew is all this, from the beginning to the end of that piece of history. So is it with Mark, and Luke, and John. In nearly all respects the things here attributed to Christ are among the least likely to have been attributed to him by popular fancy or invention; and such extraordinary traits once assigned to him, they are attributed to him in natural consistency and continuity to the end.

Whence came this character, so unlike anything the world had hitherto seen, exhibiting such marvellous keeping, symmetry, completeness, and grandeur? Could the imagination of the early Christians have given it existence? Was it enough to this end that the Hebrew community should have been strewed with fragments of tradition concerning Jesus—fragments partially true, but consisting much more of fancies and exaggerations, and that some hand from among this despised sect should have brought portions of these *disjecta membra* together? Could this have sufficed to give us the Christ of the Gospels? Need I say that such a theory gives us an effect to which the alleged cause is wholly inadequate? Such a character could not have been devised by the most favoured intelligence of that age, and we are

required to accept it as having come to us from a source to the last degree incompetent to have produced it—namely, the vagrant feeling of the Jewish populace! The atheistical theories concerning the origin of the universe consist of reasoning very much of this order; but I know not where else to find a parallel to it. Popular traditions and rumours, notoriously liable to sink into the irrational, the low, and the false, are here made to be parent to a result in which our highest natural conceptions of the intelligent, the elevated, and the true are all realised and surpassed. If it be true that what is in the effect must have been in the cause, it is certain that the Christ before us in the gospels could not possibly have been the Christ imagined by the untrained mind of the people who were first called Christians.

Upon this theory, we are required to suppose that all the miracles in those narratives are the puerile fancies of the popular credulity. Of course, if all the miracles in the Gospels are inventions, it is impossible to say what there is in these pretended histories that is not invention. If all the miracles are legendary, why not the parables, why not the discourses, and much beside? Where, in this case, may we find the unknown quantity that should be accepted as true? But, overlaid as the small residuum of truth concerning Jesus is supposed to be, by fictions teeming from the vulgar credulity of the time, it is from this source, it seems, that the character of Christ must be supposed to have come. The Hebrew populace, in these traditions concerning Jesus, attribute to him a multitude of miracles, all of such a nature that he may be supposed to have performed them; a multitude of parables, all so wise that they might have come from his intelligence;

and a multitude of feelings and utterances, all of which we see might consistently have been his feelings and his utterances. Surely, if the untutored feeling of the Jewish or Gentile multitude in that age has done this, it should not be difficult to believe that this well-ordered universe owes its origin to chance.

If we suppose Jesus Christ to have existed, to have spoken as he is said to have spoken, and to have done as he is said to have done; and if we regard the evangelists as persons who simply report to us his teaching and his deeds as these had become known to them, all is comparatively easy and natural. Every other scheme is beset with insuperable difficulties. It is, no doubt, a marvellous fact, that Christ—Christ as known from these records—should have been a reality. The difficulty, however, in accepting that fact is small, compared with the difficulty of rejecting it. It has been justly said, that to imagine a Plato you need a Plato, that to paint a Newton you need a Newton. Who, then, has painted Jesus? No man. No man could. He has depicted himself in his own manner, by his own words and deeds. The shades and tones of colouring in the portraiture are above the earthly. Only a divine hand could have laid them truthfully on the canvass.

The fact that Jesus should be made to speak of himself as he does, in many respects, in the pages of the evangelists, demands serious consideration from the enquirer after truth. We have nothing like it in the history of human nature elsewhere.

1. Jesus speaks of himself as being without sin. Other religious teachers have been holy men, but no one of them had ever claimed to be sinless; to no one of

them had sinlessness ever been attributed by others. But our Lord is described as saying: 'The Prince of 'this world cometh and hath nothing in me.' * No taint of the evil that has come from his nature will be found in mine. Again he says, 'He that sent me is with me: 'the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those 'things that please Him.' † Looking his enemies in the face, he says, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' ‡ Hence the voice which is said to have come from heaven concerning him:—'This is my beloved son, in whom I 'am well pleased, hear ye him.' § Hence the language of his disciples concerning him, as 'undefiled and separate 'from sinners,' as one who 'knew no sin;' as a lamb 'without blemish and without spot.' It is not easy to suppose that the followers of Jesus would ever have spoken of him in this manner had he not been wont to speak thus of himself. Jesus gives us the form of Jewish thought on this subject when he says to the young ruler, 'Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, that 'is God.' ‖ Hence, in claiming to be sinless in this world, Christ must be understood as claiming to be divine; and so contrary was it to all Hebrew ideas concerning human nature, even in the best of men, to describe any man as absolutely good, so certainly must expressions of that nature have sounded as nothing less than blasphemy in Jewish ears, that we may safely conclude the disciples of Christ would never have become thus bold in speaking of him had not his words and works seemed to sanction

* John xiv. 38. † John viii. 29. § John viii. 46.

‡ Matt. xvii. 5, iii. 17, xii. 18; Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22; 2 Peter i. 17.

‖ Matt. xix. 17; Mark x. 18; Luke xviii. 19.

forms of speech so peculiar and strange. Everything in the conduct of Jesus is in harmony with this impression concerning him. By making such a claim, he subjected himself to the highest, the most perilous test imaginable. But he knew what he did. He did so because he was conscious that his nature was a form of the supernatural. Even Judas, who knew all his ways, and whose spiritual perceptions and sympathies must have been but very partially alive to the beauty of the character before him, was compelled in the bitterness of his remorse to exclaim, 'I have betrayed the innocent blood.'

One feature in our Lord's history, as a consequence of this purity of his nature, is especially observable. He was eminently a man of prayer, giving whole nights, upon occasion, to such exercises. But he is never heard making confession of sin, is never heard to pray for forgiveness, though he teaches all men to do so; and he is never known to pray for grace to cleanse his nature, though all men are urged by him to abound in supplication for such aid. In this there is consistency. But it is a refined and delicate consistency, which would hardly have been perpetuated through the four Gospels, if the authors of those narratives had not been under a divine guidance in their work.

If Christ had warrant to speak of himself after this manner, he must not only have been perfect man, but something more; if he had not such warrant, then he must have fallen below the common level of humanity, as being deceiver or deceived, or a mixture of both. And if when we look to his entire portraiture as given in the Gospels, we feel that the conclusion of his having been one of the weakest or the worst of mankind, cannot be for

a moment admitted, then the only conclusion left is, that such language, however strange to our ears, must have been language which it became him to use.

In brief, if we regard Christ as a person who claimed to be sinless, and as one who through years of public life acted consistently with that pretension, we must then accept his character as being above nature—as miraculous, divine. If on the other hand we suppose the evangelists to have imagined him sinless when he was not, and still to have given his life and teaching in such forms as to be consistent throughout with the idea of his sinlessness, then we must accept the evangelists as men capable of achieving the supernatural on a scale hardly less wonderful. For one of these two things must have happened. Christ has lived a perfect life on earth, or the evangelists have made him live such a life; and the natural causes adequate to account for either of these results, are not easy to discover. It should be added, that if there be any certain guarantee against self-deception in sacred things, that guarantee, where there is ordinary intelligence, will be found in goodness. It is natural that truthful men should see the truth, that the good should discern the good. 'If a man will do 'his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of 'God.'

2. The manner in which Jesus speaks of himself in relation to truth, is not less remarkable than the manner in which he speaks of himself in relation to sin. According to his language, all truth is in him, and from him. He is not only without sin, but to him it pertains to know all that can be known concerning sin and its opposite. The mystery of being in those high

relations is mystery to us, not at all to him. Hence, while other teachers often express themselves doubtfully, and on many points confess their ignorance, Jesus never does so. His statements concerning every imaginable relation of good or evil, are always direct, decisive, in the manner of one who regards his own authority as final. Commencing his ministry in the Sermon on the Mount, he cites the maxims to which the highest human authorities among the Hebrews had given currency, and limits or reverses them in the manner of one to whose decision every other must be subordinate. His words are—it has been said of old time, thus—and thus. But I say unto you thus—and thus. To Pilate his word was —'To this end was I born, and to this end came I into 'the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.' The sense in which this language should be understood is made clear by passages in which the words are such as no lips besides his own could have uttered. 'I am the 'way,' he says, 'the truth, and the life.' He does not content himself with saying, I have come to show you the way of return to the Father, his words in effect are —I that speak unto you am it—I *am* the way. Nor does it content him to say—I am come to teach you the truth, or to teach it more clearly; he in effect says—I that speak unto you am it—I *am* the truth. Wherever you find spiritual truth it is mine—of me. Human lips had never uttered words of such import before. No teacher had ever so spoken of himself. The taught had never so spoken of an instructor. Hence the tone which pervaded the teaching of Christ was such as to lead the people to say, 'he taught as one having 'authority, and not as the scribes.' Among teachers

he gives the final word on all moral and spiritual questions. The consistency here, too, is a consistency perpetuated through the four Gospels. Whence this steadiness of touch, where the pencil needed to be so nicely—so exquisitely handled? The answer is obvious—a divine guidance only could have given us this result. Much is said by the Great Teacher, and a little—a very little said otherwise than it is, would have marred the whole. But the discrepancy does not come, the keeping is preserved—easily and naturally preserved.

Here again, supposing Jesus Christ to have spoken in this manner, he must have had warrant in claiming to be accepted in this light, or he had not. If he had such warrant, then, not only his divine mission, but his divine nature is manifest. If he had not such warrant, then in place of doing homage to him as the light of the world, it behoves us to assign him a place with the most deluded of mortals, or the most depraved.

3. Such is the language in which Jesus claims to be accepted as sinless, and as the incarnation of all truth: and not less remarkable is the language in which he assumes to himself the great work of human redemption. He is, according to his own teaching, all that the Father is. Hence his words—'He that hath seen me hath seen 'the Father.'* 'Before Abraham was, I am.'† 'I have 'glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou 'gavest me to do,' and now, oh Father, glorify thou me 'with thine own self, with the glory which I had with 'thee *before the world was.*'‡ In his human nature, Christ was subject to the Father; and there is probably a sense in which he meant to say that his Sonship altogether is

* John xiv. 9. † John viii. 58. ‡ John xvii. 45.

subordinate in the work of redemption to the divine Fatherhood. But still it is true that he was wont to affirm himself to be, in a high and mysterious sense, one with the Father—his manifested being.

This will not be at all surprising if we bear in mind the relations which Christ assumes both towards God and man. The work which he undertakes to accomplish is such as required not merely human virtue, but divine power—divine perfection. Here are words which suggest all this. 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the 'Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'* On the one side you are to imagine the presence of the whole race of man, of all lands and all time; on the other, the Divine Nature as revealing itself through moral law, and the moral government of the universe. Between these Jesus takes his place, and says—If any one from amidst that vast sea of erring natures shall come to the Father it must be through me. If any one of them be pardoned it must be through me. If any one of them be regenerated and raised to a higher life, it must be by me. I am the Way, I am the Truth, and *I am the Life.* 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know 'them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal 'life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck 'them out of my hands.'† In other words—Wherever this life is it is mine, my gift, it is of me. 'Without me ye can do nothing.'‡

Men who do not accept these words of Christ as Christians generally accept them, do still accept the Gospels as giving them all they know concerning him, and are

* John xiv. 6. † John x. 27, 28. † John xv. 5.

often careful to assure us that though they do not see in Jesus all that we profess to see in him, he is always in their eyes an eminently wise and good man. An eminently wise and good man!—that, and no more than that! Does he not discourse concerning himself as being without sin? Does he not claim to be accepted as the Incarnation of all truth? Does he not declare himself to be the sole and all-sufficient Mediator between humanity and the Infinite? Mere human wisdom and human goodness preach about itself after this manner! Call it rather human presumption, human blasphemy. It is in vain for such persons to say they do not regard such language as having really come from the lips of Christ, but as utterances attributed to him by the weakness of his followers. For it is to be remembered, that if the particular passages which I have cited as from the lips of Christ be cast aside, the Gospels will be found full of expressions which directly show, or clearly imply, that his teaching was uniformly to this effect. So that if we are to find a Christ in the Gospels at all, it must be a Christ of this character, one whose wont it was to speak of himself after this manner. If there be no Christ to realise this idea, then there is no Christ to whom certain ideas of any kind can be attached. The Gospels give us this picture or they give us none. If all these diviner elements in his teaching, and if all things supernatural in his history, are to be eliminated from the Gospels, their authority is utterly gone. What is left can have no certainty or value. Records which, according to this fancy, are convicted of lying in every page, must, in common with the convicted liar everywhere, be a witness of no worth. It is to me immeasurably more

natural to believe in these narratives in their entireness, than not to believe in them at all.

But there are other facts conspicuous in the life of Christ which tend in the most potent manner to strengthen this conclusion.

4. We all know that Jesus claimed to be received as the promised Messiah. Yes, some men will say, and therein betrayed that susceptibility of illusion so natural to minds of a religious, musing, and a mystical temperament. We all know that the near advent of this expected Deliverer was the fond notion which had taken full possession of the Jewish mind in that age. One and another, accordingly, had presented themselves claiming to be the leader who had been predicted in the old Hebrew prophecies. At length a dream of this sort came over the meditative and sensitive spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, and it was so cherished by him, that in the end it led him he scarcely knew whither.

Such is the fancy broached by some of our contemporaries. But it is to be regretted that persons so sagacious in detecting mental processes and motives in this case, should have known so well where to stop. So much of this theory as may be made to serve their purpose is taken; the remainder, which may be seen at a glance to be fatal to it, is discarded. If Jesus was indebted to the notions then current among the Jews for the thought that he might himself be the Messiah, is it not manifest that the character of the Messiahship assumed by him would be that which was then fascinating the imagination and kindling the passions of his countrymen? But was it so? Anything but that.

The service to be expected from the Messiah, accord-

ing to the teaching of Jesus, in place of realising the general anticipation, presented the strongest conceivable form of protest against it. The Messiah of the popular imagination was to be a military chief, who would vanquish the enemies of the favoured nation, and bring back the heroic times in their annals. Instead of this, Jesus came, saying—'My kingdom is not of this 'world, else would my servants fight.' From the first to the last he declines to be judge or ruler, and confines his mission rigorously to ends purely spiritual. His generation cannot accept him in this character. Even his own disciples are slow—very slow in conforming themselves to the simply religious object of his mission. They continue to dream, in some form or other, about a kingdom, and thrones, and power; and in place of such things, he bids them expect persecution, imprisonments, and death. In place of raising the battle-cry, you hear him say, 'If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him 'the left also; if he shall take thy cloak, let him take thy 'coat.' 'Is any great among you, let him be your servant.'

Jesus finds men enslaved to appetite, passion, and falsehood, and he comes to deliver them from thraldom in those forms. The world had never been so thoroughly materialised as in that age. Religious faith had died out. Wealth had increased enormously, and the life of the most cultured classes, in common with the rudest, was of the earth earthy. This bad leaven, which had saturated the nations, was in Judea as elsewhere. Nevertheless, the great revolution which Jesus aims to bring to pass, is that which shall end in reconciling men to God, and in enabling them to realise their highest sense of happiness in the consciousness of

being conformed to the will of the Divine Father. This is the elevation, the wealth, the power, the blessedness to which Jesus would raise the people about him, and in comparison with such revelations, everything merely earthly is described by him as little more than the shadow to the substance.

How natural is all this on the supposition that Jesus came to us from the bosom of the Father? How utterly unnatural on the supposition of his being moved to his course by the popular ideas and passions of the time? Had he been so weak as to have been deceived in this matter, his deception, we may be sure, would have gone in the direction of the popular opinion. Had he been wicked enough to have descended to the practice of deception, his life and teaching would certainly have been just the contrary of what we know them to have been. The difference between his Messiahship, and the messiahship of the popular imagination, presents all the difference between the carnal and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly.

5. Not less worthy of notice is the contrast between the most accredited form of religion in that age, and religion as taught and exemplified by Christ. The great religionists of that day were the Pharisees. Some centuries had passed since the last prophet had spoken. The canon of the Old Testament had been long since complete; and in place of the inspired seers, had come a race of uninspired commentators on their writings. This change was a grave deterioration. These men were the theologians of their time, and, after the oriental manner, the theologian was the man of literature and science—in fact, of the culture of his age. The Hebrew priesthood

had not been a power even in rude times, it became less and less so as civilisation advanced. But the sect of the Pharisees embraced the lawyers and writers of their day, and were a formidable body of men—indeed, the most formidable known to society in Palestine in that age. They affected to digest and condense the written wisdom of the prophets, and by that means to perpetuate the distinctive faith and worship of their country among the people. But, unhappily, their office was not well discharged. Often did they misinterpret the text, and as often put their own false comment into the place of it. Commonly they missed the grand spiritual element in the prophetic words, and the general effect of their labours was to school their pupils into little pedantries and dry formalisms, which not only left the soul untouched, but confirmed it in its sordid ways by assuring it that religious life meant nothing more than conformity to the religious routine which they had themselves prescribed.

The Pharisees, as is well known, were men of extreme scrupulosity in regard to everything ritual and external in connection with religion. They not only paid their tithes with the strictest punctuality, but their zeal led them to stretch the system beyond the letter of the law, so as to embrace the smallest herbs in their garden—the mint, the rue, and the cummin. They made broad their phylacteries, decorating them with texts of Scripture, to bespeak their reverence for the sacred book. The Sabbath with them was a rigorous observance. They prayed at the corners of the streets, as the hour for prayer happened to come round. They never sat down to meat without the ceremony of washing their hands. In short,

they made themselves most conspicuous by the multitude of such observances, and the exactness with which they attended to them. And they had their reward. The general impression was, that if they were not religious men, it must be hard to say where such men could be found. They were seen of men, and praised of men. They were greeted reverentially in the market-places. They were assigned the uppermost rooms at feasts. In regard to religion, they were the model men of their time. Generally accepted as such.

But Christ knew them from the beginning. From the commencement of his ministry he is heard to say, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteous-'ness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise 'enter the kingdom of heaven.'* His great caution to his disciples is—'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, 'which is hypocrisy.'† In his view, the formalism of such men was a mask, under the cover of which they were living to the gratification of their selfish passions—their vanity, pride, covetousness, intolerance, and ambition. Erring thus themselves, they of course taught other men to err in like manner—blind leaders of the blind. Christ resolved, accordingly, to lay his hand on that mask, to tear it down, and to reveal to all men the foul and hideous things it had concealed.

What had Jesus to gain by so doing? He might make some converts to his views among the common people. But that would be a slow process, and, at best, would give him but a feeble weapon to wield against the hostility of the intellectual, the rich, and the powerful, whom his policy would provoke to the uttermost.

* Matt. v. 20.

Dr. Paley has said that the man who commits himself against an established and powerful religious party, should go to his work with a halter about his neck. In challenging a conflict with such odds against him, Jesus must have seen that the result would be ceaseless persecution, and in the end, probably, the heaviest penalty persecution could inflict.

These facts oblige us to suppose, either that Jesus Christ was a weak man greatly overrating his power, or that his conduct must have been regulated by some very high and special reasons. In the Gospels we trace the presence of such reasons. Jesus, there, is not a man merely, intent on carrying out some self-originated scheme. He is the Son of God, bearing a divine commission. This commission is not an instruction to drill men into an elaborate ritualism, but a command so to train them that they may become spiritual, earnest, and self-consecrated, and so be prepared to become worshippers of the Father in spirit and in truth. What he claims for the Father of Spirits is, not the muttering of words, nor the posturings of the body, but the homage of spiritual thought and of a spiritual life. How fitting is all this as coming from a teacher of such pretensions! But what was there in the spirit of that age to have inspired such pure and lofty aims? The Sadducees and the Pharisees had divided the spirit of the time between them. The rest consisted of the common people, whose social habits were shaped for the most part to the low and the sensuous. Need it be said that it is not the spirit of the age that we see in Jesus, but a spirit high above it, and such as could not have come from it?

It is observable in our Lord's teaching, that little is said in reproof of the Sadducees, much—very much in reproof of the Pharisees. The reason is obvious. The great danger to society is not so much from scepticism, as from superstition—not so much from an absolute rejection of religion as from a disposition to substitute a false religion in the place of the true, the semblance in the place of the reality. This sin, embodied so memorably in the history of the Pharisees, is the sin the most easily besetting humanity everywhere and always. Hence the ceaseless exposure of it in the Gospels. The mask taken from the face of the living Pharisee was torn down partly for his sake, partly for the sake of those who looked on, but most of all for the sake of the unborn humanity which it was foreseen would be ever inclined to run into the same snare. Christ saw in the religion of such men the most formidable antagonism to everything deserving the name of religion. The false confidence which possessed them made them impervious to every appeal, so that there was more hope of publicans and harlots than of them. The great folly, and sin, and bondage of Christendom at this hour lies here—not in the disposition of the people to become atheists, but in their readiness to substitute a ritualistic in the place of a spiritual worship. To poor human nature nothing can be more agreeable than to be assured that a little decent formalism in this world will suffice to make all right for the next. To be told that the only happy beings hereafter will be those who have learnt to curb their selfish passions, and to cherish their opposites in this life, is not so acceptable. But so Christ spoke concerning laying up

treasures in heaven. It has been left to others too largely to reverse his maxims.

6. In harmony with this feature of our Lord's teaching is the superiority evinced by him to that Jewish exclusiveness and intolerance which had become a proverb in that day. He spoke at first of having come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but he is not long in announcing his more enlarged mission. When the Roman Centurion sought his aid with so much reverence and trust, he is described as turning to those who followed, and as saying 'Many shall come, from the 'east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and 'Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the 'children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer 'darkness.' * When we call to mind the explanation and defence on which Peter was obliged to enter, even with the Christian brotherhood at Jerusalem, when, in consequence of the Gentile conversions under his ministry, he 'went in to men uncircumcised and did eat with them,' we may readily see how startling and offensive such teaching must have been to not a few who listened to it. The Hebrew crowd could be induced to hearken to Paul, much as they distrusted him and hated him, until he was heard to say that he should turn from them to the Gentiles; but then the cup of their wrath became full to overflowing. How far above and apart from all this was the spirit which said, 'Go preach my gospel to every 'creature!' In what school of Galilee or of Jerusalem could Jesus have learnt doctrine of this order?

7. But if the Jews hated the Gentiles, they hated the Samaritans still more. The Samaritans, though of

* Matt. viii. 11, 12.

gentile origin, had conformed largely to the Hebrew ritual, and had persuaded themselves that their worship in the mountain of Samaria was quite as acceptable to Jehovah as the worship at Jerusalem. But, as often happens between warring sects, this partial conformity embittered rather than diminished hostility. The Jews, in place of accepting the Samaritans as brethren, excommunicated them, and would have 'no dealings' with them. To have saved a Samaritan from drowning, or from an assassin, would have been no virtue, but a crime, needing absolution from a priest. How far Jesus was from imbibing this spirit is manifest in the narrative concerning his dialogue with the woman of Samaria, and his preaching to the crowds of Samaritans who came forth to gaze upon him, and to listen to his words.

But even that incident is not the most significant in the Gospels bearing on this point. Those narratives present a gallery of marvellous pictures in which our Lord has deposited his instructions for all time: and when he would add one to the series which should expressly set forth that pure human feeling the touch of which should suffice to make the whole world kin, where does he find the man who shall be the embodiment of this virtue? He finds him in a Samaritan.* A traveller journeying from Jerusalem towards Jericho falls among thieves, who rob him, wound him, and leave him half dead. It happens that a priest comes that way, and seeing the sufferer in that state he passes by on the other side. After him comes a Levite, who does the same. The man is not a Jew, therefore not a

* Luke x. 30 37.

neighbour, and not entitled to anything neighbourly. So Judaism is made to pass before us, in its most representative men, as a system in which the pretence of piety, in place of elevating and strengthening natural feeling, is seen to deprave and destroy it. But next comes a Samaritan, a man with whom the Priest or the Levite would not exchange a friendly office of any kind—not even a word. The Samaritan, as we know, cares for the dying man on the roadside, takes him to the inn, and provides for him there, and as the beautiful story reaches its close, the voice of the relator is heard saying aloud—'Go thou and do likewise'—and he means that those words shall ring in the ears of men wherever his Gospel comes, through all the ages. Is the mind thus revealed to us a mind that can be said to have been moulded by Jewish thought, governed by Jewish feeling? The question answers itself.

8. Under this hostile feeling in regard to the system and aims of the Pharisees, and in regard to Jewish exclusiveness generally, there lived in the mind of Christ a purpose which went far beyond anything suspected by his enemies, and which was only imperfectly understood by his friends. Hints indeed concerning it he dropped from time to time, as we learn from all the evangelists; but we learn also, that those who heard them, and were even amazed by them, did not comprehend them. He never ceased to speak of introducing a kingdom, and of being himself its king. But the nature of that kingdom and kingship was not to be readily apprehended. The day of Pentecost, and subsequent events, have since shed instructive light upon his words. His kingdom was to have its place in all nations. His subjects were to be

found wherever humanity was found. Before him the distinctions of countries, governments, and races were nothing, and man in his susceptibility of good was everything. In this universal monarchy, the great bond of amity was to be the relation of each subject to himself. The love of himself was to embrace the love of the brethren, and the love of all men. In this kingdom force is to be unknown, affection is to be a law unto itself. Each man gives himself to his brethren because he has first given himself to his Lord. All is done willingly, nothing by constraint. Affinities from within, not laws from without, are to hold this vast fraternisation together, as one body of which Christ is the head. Magistracy has its sphere of action, but that sphere is altogether outside this circle, never within it. The rule of civil government is over the body, and over the material things relating to the body; the soul, and the spiritual things relating to it, Christ claims as his own domain. In religion, men are to obey *his* commandments, to the exclusion of all commands at variance with them. In the religious conscience there is not to be a divided allegiance. Christ claims it all as belonging to himself, and leaves civil allegiance to be given to Cæsar, as belonging to him.

The church thus formed may seem to be the image of weakness, but the gates of hell are not to prevail against it. Earthly rulers may make incursions on the borders of this territory, but they can never reach the heart of it. They can destroy the body, but after that there is no more that they can do. Bound to each other by the love of their Lord, purified more and more through the influence of that love, this great commonwealth of redeemed natures is to ripen into meetness to become a

commonwealth in the skies. What a conception is here! What a conception to live for and to die for! What a conception to have been so far realised during the last eighteen centuries, and to be holding out at this moment higher promise than ever of consummation! Is this an invention? Who then has been the inventor? Must we look for its origin to the loose popular feeling of Palestine as left by Jesus when he passed away from it? Philosophy has been wont to exact that there should be some natural and obvious relation between causes and effects.

Now in presenting this evidence touching the claims of the New Testament, and especially as showing the originality, and the transcendent beauty and greatness of the character of Jesus Christ, let it not be supposed that we are insensible to the sources of difficulty in relation to this great subject which press so painfully on some minds. No doubt, the existence of the Divine Being is a great mystery, and that this wonderful Existence should have acted towards this world as the Old and New Testament affirm him to have done is very marvellous. But to suppose the non-existence of this Being is to be landed in a much deeper mystery: and to suppose that this world has been left with no other light for its guidance than the self-help now possible to man; and that all the evidence which seems so clearly to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God is a delusion—to be shut up to that is to be agonised, crushed by the inexplicable. The problem of existence is not without its mystery, even under the light of revelation, but coming upon us apart from that light, the darkness of our destiny becomes a darkness to be felt, a region peopled with greater terrors than are said to have scared the

imagination of those who passed through the old Eleusinian mysteries. I believe in Christ, but perfection in anything is not for the present. Our probation is a conflict in regard to faith, as in regard to every spiritual attainment. Our faith, in common with all virtue, is the fruit of our spiritual manhood, and is measured by it. Our intelligence is right in things moral and religious as our hearts are right. 'Keep thine heart with all 'diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' 'If a man 'will do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether 'it be of God.' The thing needed, accordingly, is not so much more light, as more goodness, enabling us to make a good use of the light we possess. Belief through the universe, must be an act of moral trust so long as the finite shall be face to face with the Infinite. In no state can we expect to *know* everything. At best we can know but little. And it is not well to allow perplexities concerning what we do not know, to rob us of the rest and peace that may be derived from what we do know.

SECTION IV.

ON INSPIRATION.

CONCERNING the Inspiration of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, two questions demand our attention—Is the alleged Inspiration a Fact? If so, what is its *Nature* and *Extent*? To suppose that a revelation has been made from God to man, must be to feel assured that it has been attested by its appropriate evidence. The prophet through whom such intelligence comes must have evidence warranting him to believe that he has become the subject of such illumination. This evidence must be supernatural, but the natural reason of the man will be competent to judge of its value. It will of course be only moral evidence, but it will be such as to make submission to it a duty. What is true in this respect of the prophet, must be true of the people to whom the prophet's message is addressed. In their view, the message must take with it its proper evidence, and of that evidence they will judge for themselves. In the times both of the Old Testament and of the New men were required to try the spirits, and were expected to distinguish between divinely commissioned

men, and mere pretenders. Men are not expected to believe without evidence, and to call that evidence which the reason cannot understand and appreciate would be irrational.

But the evidence concerning a supposed revelation will not be all external. There will be evidence, either for or against its claims, arising from its *contents*. On these also, the reason of man has, in a measure, to form its judgment. The common division of Christian evidence into external and internal suggests this conclusion. This distinction supposes that we not only know that God is, but that we know in some degree *what* he is. If we can know nothing of God, we can know nothing of the proper or improper in respect to what is said to have come from him. What God is we can know only from what he has done—done in the worlds of matter and of mind. It is only by looking to what is ethical in man, that we can at all judge concerning the just in the government of God. Our highest conception of Deity must be evolved from within. It can only be corroborated from without. If the light of our moral nature may not be trusted, then we have no light. In that case, to reject a revelation could be no sin, inasmuch as all capacity for judging of its claims would be wanting. It is true, there is moral disorder in man, and disorder in the world about him, and here difficulty thickens upon us. Still, the highest conception we can form of the excellence possible to the nature of man, is that which we should account as proper to him; and the highest conception we can form of the perfection possible to God, is that which we should account as proper to Him. Descartes was right—our capacity to conceive of Infinite

Perfection must have come *from* Infinite Perfection. The capacity implies its object. The Deity of our conception is not greater than the Deity who has made us capable of that conception. It is such faith in God, that must determine our faith in regard to any communication said to have come from Him. Whatever shall seem to be at variance, either within us or about us, with such perfection in the Supreme Existence, can be so only in seeming. Such is the province of reason in regard to revelation. Some men would reduce religion to mere sentiment—instinct. Others leave feeling no place, by losing themselves amidst the exactitudes of pure science. In these ways, both would dispense with revelation. But such are unbalanced conditions of human intelligence—unnatural, and can only lead to the unnatural. Certainly, if the book of nature be perfect, the power of such men to interpret it is not perfect. It ill becomes such one-sided specimens of humanity to affect to determine what may or may not be done by the Deity in relation to a world like ours.

The idea of an inspired *mind* is inseparable from our idea of inspiration. It consists in the Divine speaking through the human. Man is here a worker together with God. In its substance the message may be purely divine; in its manner of communication it must be in great part human. It is thus in fact in all the departments of moral agency. In physical changes, the elements themselves are wholly inert—the tendencies or powers which seem to belong to them come wholly from the Creator. But in the mind of man there is a separate motive power, and though God rules the world, the will of man, and everything that can affect its action,

is free. Men may become blind to evidence, if they will —may harden themselves against goodness, if they will. Man could sin even in Paradise. Angels could sin even in heaven. Hence it is reasonable to conclude, that even in inspiration, if there be much of God, there will also be much of man. The very elevation to which the mind is raised when so influenced, should be expected to bring out the human with special vividness and force. Whatever may be peculiar to the man may be expected to give its impress in a special degree to the message. Of course, the liability to err will be excluded. The purpose of Inspiration supposes that much. But to almost any extent compatible with that principle, the human may be expected to become conspicuous even in inspired utterances.

It may be well for the enquirer to mark the strong *presumptive* evidence in favour of the inspiration of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures before directing his attention to the positive evidence relating to it. We have glanced at this elsewhere. After all the exceptions that have been taken to the claims of the Hebrew Scriptures, there is much in them that cannot possibly be explained if those claims are rejected. The views concerning the Divine Being, and the nature of religion, in those writings, are such as could never have originated with the Hebrew nation, and such as could not have been borrowed from any other. What the Egyptian and Asiatic nations were in these respects, the Hebrews would have been had they been left to themselves. In general culture, they were for the most part below their neighbours. This phenomenon has been felt to be perplexing. Great pains have been taken to detract from the

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startling significance of this fact by traducing the character of the Hebrew people. Their writings, it has been alleged are not so ancient as we affirm; their theology was not so pure; their religion was outward and unspiritual; and their morals below the ordinary level even in those times. But what has been said in favour of the religious intelligence and religious life of those people is abundantly sustained by the book of Job, the book of Psalms, and the pages of Isaiah. It is true the character of the nation was always below the special grandeur of its theism, and they were with difficulty kept in anything like a true allegiance to it. But what is the inference from these facts? Clearly that if the Hebrews had been left to have originated their own creed they would have originated something very different. Their lofty monotheism is as light opposed to the surrounding darkness, whence came it?' What, short of its divine attestations, could have given it authority through so many centuries over such unwilling subjects? The moral code of the Hebrews is scarcely less remarkable than their theism. The Decalogue is some ten centuries older than the oldest system of ethics that has come down to us from the ancient world. But while thus before all such systems, it would be easy to show that it embraces the essence of them all. The process of intelligence in this field is to collect facts; the last is to digest the material brought together so as to give us a few great principles. But Greece was an outskirt of barbarism when the Hebrew intellect was capable of this ripe service in moral science. Proudhon, a man of great power, and no friend to Christianity, has said, 'Even the number of the com-'mandments of the Decalogue, and their order, has

'nothing in it that is fortuitous. It is the genesis of 'mental phenomena, the ladder of duty and of crime rest-'ing upon an analysis wisely and marvellously deve-'loped.'* And the relation is intimate between this scheme of ethics, and the scheme of redemption.

If we pass to the New Testament, it must be remembered that our Lord does not appear to have committed anything to writing. At the same time, it was of the greatest moment that record should be made of his sayings and deeds, and that this record should be strictly trustworthy. But how was this result to be secured? Surely not by means of natural memory alone. The evangelists give us descriptions of scenes which they witnessed, and of scenes of which they could make no report but what had been made to them. They report sayings and discourses which they heard long years before, and others which they had not heard at all. All this, too, is done with a minuteness which must be fatal to them as witnesses, if they were merely human witnesses. In delivering such testimony as merely human witnesses, it would have behoved them to confess, on some occasions at least, their liability to err through false information or failure of memory. But it is remarkable that they never do so express themselves. Their language is uniformly that of men who are confident as to the accuracy of their representations. Doubt—hesitancy—their writings contain no sign of any such feeling. Their statements as historians, and their expositions as teachers, are all of the same positive complexion. Paul, though as one born out of due time, shares the same feeling. 'The things I wrote unto you,' he says

* *De la Celeb.* 17.

to the Corinthians, 'are the *commandments of the Lord.*' If any man preach otherwise than he had preached 'let 'him be *accursed.*' More than two hundred passages might be cited from the writings of Paul in which he expresses himself after this manner concerning his own teaching, and that of his companions in office. When these men so wrote and preached there was no New Testament existing to which they could appeal as an authority. Their authority was strictly personal, in relation both to doctrine and fact. Nevertheless, we see the unqualified positiveness with which they speak. We can understand this, if we can suppose them to have been convinced that they were divinely guided—inspired in relation to such matters. On any other supposition their conduct is wholly inexplicable. In truth, it is not too much to say, that apart from the authority assigned to the writings of the New Testament, the mission of Jesus, beautiful as it was, would have died away from the memories of men after no long interval.

On the other hand, it is to be confessed that nothing can be more natural, and apparently spontaneous, than the manner in which the New Testament writers present their information. Many of the things they touch upon —the cloak and the parchments to wit—and the manner in which they make their allusions to such things, seem to say that they were acting with a freedom strictly the counterpart of our own in similar circumstances. But this is not the only connection in which the relation between human agency and the divine is much too subtle and secret to be traced by our sagacity. We are all free agents, but if we are right at last, it will be as the effect of influences upon our destiny which will not have been

the less real because shrouded in mystery. Granted all the appearances of spontaneousness in what the inspired writers present to us, we still have to deal, not only with the strong presumptive evidence on the side of their inspiration, but with a large mass of evidence of a more direct kind.

The word 'Inspiration' may be said to be a Scriptural term. The word—θεόπνευστος—God-inspired, is used by Paul to describe this special form of Divine influence.* The doctrine, however, is affirmed by other words quite as clearly and naturally as by that word. The question is, were the sacred writers under a *divine* and *unerring guidance* in what they professed to *approve* and *teach*? Are they to us, in this view, an infallible authority? If so, the more various the language in which we are assured of this fact the better. The most forcible testimony in its favour may possibly come in the form of indirect evidence.

We shall glance in the first place at the language of the prophets of the Old Testament on this subject. The Hebrew prophets claimed to be heard as men who spoke, not their own words, but 'the word of the Lord.' Their message did not originate with them, it came to them. Jehovah said to Moses concerning himself and Aaron, 'I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and will 'teach you what ye shall do; and Aaron spake all the 'words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses.'† Here we have the action of the divine upon the human in the full sense of an inspired guidance—so early did the idea of inspiration become familiar to the Hebrew mind. Again we read, 'But the prophet which shall presume

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † Exodus iv. 14-16.

'to speak a word in my name which *I have not com-*
'*manded him to speak*, or that shall speak in the name
'of other gods, that prophet shall die. When a prophet
'speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow
'not, or come not to pass, that is the thing which *the Lord*
'*hath not spoken.*'* Prophets, accordingly, were to be regarded as men, not merely self-moved, but God-moved, in their utterances. They were to speak to others strictly as the Lord had spoken to them. What is asserted in this manner from time to time through the Old Testament, comes to be in its aggregate the Divine testimony as to the character of those ancient writings as a whole. 'Who is he,' exclaims the prophet, 'to
'whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken that he may
'declare it?'—and then follows a series of verses beginning with the words so common on such occasions—
'Thus saith the Lord.'† In other parts of the same prophet we read, 'Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud,
'*for the Lord hath spoken.*' 'And these are the *words*
'*that the Lord spake* against Babylon, and against the
'land of the Chaldeans, *by Jeremiah the prophet.*' 'The
'Lord hath both devised and done that which *he spake*
'against the inhabitants of Babylon.'‡ Such is the language of all the prophets. Furthermore, the instances are almost endless in which the prophets speak of the word of the Lord as *coming* to them, and as *given* to them. The Divine Being must have disposed these

* Deut. xviii. 20 *et seq.*

† Jer. iv. 1; ix. 12; xiv. 15; xxx. 4; xli. 12.

‡ 1 Kings xii. 22; 1 Chron. xvii. 3; Jer. vii. 1, xvii. 1, xxvi. 1, xxvii. 1, xxx. 1; Isaiah i. 2; Ezek. iii. 1-11; Hosea i. 1; Malachi i. 1.

men to this all but perpetual use of such language, intending that the people should be led to regard the message of the prophets as from himself, and if so they were inspired men; or they must have assumed this language without warrant, and so have been knaves or fools, and all idea of a revelation of any kind as having come through them must be surrendered.

We shall now look to the New Testament, and see how far its verdict may be said to be in favour of this asserted inspiration of the Old. It is well known that the Jews believed in the plenary inspiration of their Scriptures—the *teaching* in the books of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, was everywhere to them of Divine authority. Their appeal to their Scriptures was precisely such as evangelical Protestants have been wont to make. We have seen in part what our Lord's manner was in this respect. He often appeals to the Old Testament as of decisive authority, and never so speaks of it as to suggest that it consisted, in his view, of a mixture of the credible and the incredible. 'Have ye not *read*, that He 'which made them at the beginning made them male 'and female?'* This is a piece of *history*, and we are here in effect told, that to find it in Genesis, is to find it where it should be accepted as true. 'But as touching 'the resurrection of the dead, have ye not *read*, that 'which was *spoken unto you by God*, saying I am the God 'of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob.'† This again is a piece of *history*, but to have read it where we find it is enough to place its truthfulness beyond doubt. If language can have any certain meaning, the meaning

* Matt. xix. 4. † Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

conveyed by these modes of expression must be that what is taught as history in the Old Testament should be accepted as such. So in the history of the Temptation, our Lord replies to the enemy by citing the then received Scriptures, saying—it is *written*, it is *written*, it is *written*. Beyond the texts so adduced there was no appeal. Often does he remind the people of what Moses had commanded or said, strictly in the manner in which men do now who believe in the full inspiration of the Hebrew lawgiver. 'Had ye believed in Moses, ye would have believed in 'me, for he wrote of me. But if ye *believe not his* '*writings*, how shall ye believe my words.'* He speaks of David, of Jacob, of Daniel, of Josiah, of Hosea, of Zechariah—all as prophets; that is, as men whose word was the word of the Lord.† 'Ye do err,' said Jesus, 'not knowing the Scriptures (τας γραφας) nor the power 'of God.' Much does he say to the same effect. 'Did 'ye never read in the *Scriptures*, the stone which the 'builders rejected the same is become the head of the 'corner?'‡ 'Search the *Scriptures*—they testify of me.' 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, 'and he shall presently give me twelve legions of angels? 'But then how shall the *Scriptures* be fulfilled that *thus* '*it must be*.'§ 'Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe '*all that the prophets have spoken*, ought not Christ to 'have suffered these things, and to have entered into his 'glory? And beginning at *Moses*, and *all the prophets*, 'he expounded unto them in *all the Scriptures*, the things 'concerning himself.'‖ Again, 'then opened he their

* John v. 46, 47, vii. 19–22; Matt. viii. 4, xix. 8; xxiii. 2.
† Matt. vii. 17; xii. 17–38; xv. 7; xxi. 16, 42; xxii. 43; xxv. 13.
‡ Matt. xxi. 42. § Matt. xxv. 53, 54. ‖ Luke xxiv. 25–27.

'understandings that they might *understand* the *Scrip-*
'*tures.*' * Here we have the exact manner in which the Jews were accustomed to speak of their Scriptures, believing them to have been divinely inspired; and in which we are ourselves accustomed to speak of them, believing the same thing concerning them. Sometimes our Lord uses the singular term *scripture*, which refers to the canon of Scripture as then recognised; and sometimes the plural *scriptures*, as referring to the parts of which the canon is composed. Of this collection of writings he sometimes speaks as being 'the law and 'the prophets.' He also speaks of it as threefold—the law of *Moses*, the *prophets*, and the *Psalms*.

Need anything be said as to the natural conclusion from this language? How is it to be avoided? It has been said, indeed, that our Lord knew this notion of the Jews concerning their Scriptures to be a popular delusion, but that he deemed it well to attempt to further his particular object by availing himself of it. In other words, Jesus affected to believe what he did not believe, that a mission declared to be emphatically a mission of sincerity and truth might be served by the deception! Such a charge may be safely left to refute itself. We have shown largely that the Saviour was far from yielding in any such manner to Jewish prejudice. Had the Pharisee and Scribe been in error in this matter, as in others, he would have exposed their error in this instance as in others. Christ left it to other men to set the example of doing evil that good may come.

But men who dare not go thus far, allege that Jesus must not be supposed to have been wholly beyond the

* Luke xxiv. 45.

influence of the ideas prevalent about him, and that this may be one of the points on which he shared in the error, or imperfect knowledge of his time. This matter, however, is one of such moment as to render it to the last degree improbable that his mind was left uninformed concerning it. If all his appeals of this nature to Old Testament Scripture are to be taken as samples of the prejudice and misconception to which his nature was liable, where or when can we be sure that the things set forth by him as true are not untrue? Is it the Light of the World that should be spoken of after this manner? Happily, our Lord himself has demonstrated the fallacy of this assumption. If he may be supposed to have seen the truth in this respect but imperfectly in his early years, we can hardly imagine that he could have needed enlightenment in relation to it when he entered on his public ministry. From that time at least, his words are not his own merely, but those of the Father who sent him. And if we could suppose him to have been in error on this vital question to the time of his death, can we for a moment imagine that the misconception would be found in him even after his resurrection? For it is to be remembered that he nowhere speaks more strongly touching the inspired authority of Moses, of the Prophets, and of the Psalms, than in his discourse to the disciples on the way to Emaus. The last chapter of Luke is enough to settle this question. Among his last words, delivered from the other side of death and the grave, is the assurance that the Old Testament was full of prophecy concerning himself.

While such was the language of our Lord on this subject, what was the language of the writers of the New

Testament? Do they appeal to Moses and the prophets after the same manner? Assuredly they do. 'Men 'and brethren,' says Peter, 'this Scripture must needs 'be fulfilled which *the Holy Ghost by the mouth of* '*David spake* concerning Judas.'* Again, the same apostle says, 'those things which *God hath showed before* '*by the mouth of all his holy prophets*, he hath fulfilled.'† Hence the language of the church at Jerusalem. 'Thou 'art God—who *by the mouth of thy servant David hast* '*said*, Why do the people rage.' Thus it was God who spoke through the prophets—through them all. In his second epistle Peter writes, 'We have also a more sure' 'word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that you take 'heed, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day 'dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts, knowing 'this first, that *no prophecy of Scripture* is of any private 'interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time 'by the will of man, but *holy men of God spake as they* '*were moved by the Holy Ghost.*' The word of the Old Testament was 'sure' for the reason assigned; and the word of the New Testament was sure as being a fulfilment of the prophecy that had gone before. Hence the words of Zacharias, blessing God as having 'raised up 'a horn of salvation in the house of David, as *he spake by* '*his holy prophets which have been since the world began.*'

In Paul's second Epistle to Timothy we find the well-known passage, 'All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of 'God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for cor-'rection, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of 'God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished with all good 'works.' By the 'all Scripture,' or 'every writing,'

* Acts i. 3. † Acts iii. 18.

referred to here, we are of course to understand the sacred writings of the Jews, as distinguished from all merely human compositions; and of those writings as thus recognised, the affirmation is made, that they are all 'God-'*breathed*—God-*inspired*.' Some, indeed, read, 'all *Scripture inspired*, is profitable'—not 'all Scripture *is by inspiration of God, and* is profitable,' &c. But if the verb be not introduced, as in our version, then the conjunction is used as it is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. I accept the rendering of our translators as the true one. In this view, the passage affirms the inspiration of the whole of the Old Testament. The language of Paul in other connections is such as to show that his words in this text should be taken in their largest sense. 'What advantage then hath the Jew? Much every 'way, chiefly because unto them were committed the '*Oracles of God*.'* There was not a Jew in that age who would not have understood this expression as a recognition of the inspired authority of the whole of the Old Testament. No Hebrew of that day had heard of any distinction between inspired and uninspired in that volume. The uses assigned by the apostle to the Old Testament Scriptures in his language to Timothy, is the same in substance that he has assigned to them when writing to the Romans. 'For *whatsoever things were* '*written aforetime*, were written for our learning, that *we* '*through patience and comfort of the Scriptures*, might have 'hope.' It is true, the apostle does not here say expressly that those Scriptures were inspired to these ends, but what short of inspiration could have given them the adaptation and power here attributed to them? The

* Rom. iii. 2.

strict reading of the passage would be—'for *everything* 'that was anciently written was written *for our instruc-* '*tion.*' Fully to the effect of this passage are the words of Paul to the Corinthians. 'Now all these things hap- 'pened to them for examples, and were *written for* '*our instruction.*' So that even the historical Scriptures have been in some way inspired with a view to our learning and improvement. I might cite many texts in which the writers of the New Testament quote the language of the Old Testament as being the understood utterance, not of man, but of the Holy Spirit. 'Well said the 'Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto your fathers.' 'As the *Holy Ghost saith*, to-day if ye will, harden not 'your hearts.' 'The *Holy Ghost thus signifying*, that 'the way unto the holiest of all was not yet manifest.' 'Wherefore also *the Holy Ghost is to us a witness*, for 'after that *he had said*,' &c. In short, so thoroughly does the New Testament grow out of the Old, and rest upon it, that there are between four and five hundred references to the earlier collection of sacred writings in the later. So much for the alleged indifference of the apostles to the historical antecedents of the Gospel, and to historical proof generally.

But if the testimony of our Lord to the inspired authority of the Old Testament was such as we have seen, it is reasonable to expect that this testimony will be no less decisive in reference to the men who were to be the first preachers of his Gospel, and who were to give it to mankind in the form in which it should be known for all time to come. The New Testament is the development of the Old. It gives us the same theme, but with greater clearness and fulness. The presumption accordingly is,

that the Divine Guidance would in this case be greater —and it was greater. The passages from the lips of our Lord bearing most on this point will be found in John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xv. 26, 27; xvi. 12, 13. According to these Scriptures the Holy Ghost was to be given to the disciples to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance. Of course we are not by these words to understand 'all things' in the most absolute sense. But we do understand these terms as denoting all things necessary to a clear and full knowledge of the religious truth which it was the object of the Saviour's mission to lodge in the minds and hearts of men. As teachers of this truth, whether orally or by writing, they were to become competent and unerring guides. It has indeed been said that nothing more was intended by this promise of the Saviour than that the effect of the active service to which the disciples would be called after his resurrection, would be to give them a clearer and more healthy state of mind wherewith to look to the past and the present! I cannot bring myself to waste a sentence in the refutation of such a piece of fantasy.

We have still to look to the manner in which the New Testament writers express themselves concerning their own authority. Do they claim to be persons under a special and divine guidance in what they teach? An apostle is one sent—sent on a definite errand by a competent authority. In this case everything seems to say that the person sent must be supposed to have been qualified to discharge the trust committed to him with the strictest fidelity and efficiency. We have to place ourselves in the circumstances of the first Christians, and then to imagine a document coming to us beginning with

these words, 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the 'will of God,' and our first impression on hearing these words I conceive would be, that a wise and good man so writing must be possessed of a special claim on our submission—a claim fully to the effect of what might be founded on inspiration. 'The word of God which ye 'heard of us ye received, *not as the word of man*, but as it 'is in truth, *the word of God.*' * 'If any man obey 'not *our word* by this epistle, note that man, and have *no* '*company with him.*' † So in a passage before cited, 'If 'any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let 'him acknowledge that *the things which I write unto you* '*are the commandments of God.*' ‡ In other words—my authority in these things is ultimate—I have it from God. John writes to the same effect. 'We are of God. 'He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God 'heareth not us. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth and* '*the spirit of error.*' § The language of Peter is no less decisive. 'That ye may be mindful of the words that 'were spoken before by the holy prophets, *and of the* '*commandments of us, the apostles of Jesus Christ.*' 'Even 'as our brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given 'unto him hath written unto you. As also in all his 'epistles, in which there are some things hard to be 'understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable 'wrest, as they do also (*τὰς λοίπας γράφας*) *the other* '*Scriptures*, to their own destruction.' In these texts we find that obedience to apostolic authority was the test of truth. There was no cognisance of Christian character without it. The commandments of the apostles

* 1 Thess. ii. 13. † Ibid. iv. 8.
‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 37, 38. § 1 Ep. iv. 6.

were placed on a level with the utterances of the holy prophets; and Paul's writings are 'scriptures' in the sense in which the other sacred writings were 'scriptures.' Need I say more? It is true Paul speaks of giving instruction in one instance without having commandment from the Lord so to do: but the natural inference here is, that when he does not make an exception of that sort, the exception does not exist—he does speak by commandment.

Supposing the apostles to have been inspired men in the sense commonly understood among us, what language could have been more natural and proper than the language we have cited? Supposing them not to have been under such influence, what language could have been more unnatural—improper? It should be remembered, moreover, that the passages I have adduced are merely samples—a small selection from the great mass which it would have been easy to have presented.

But the special inspiration of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures being established as a *Fact*, an important question remains, viz.—What was the *Nature* and *Extent* of this inspiration? The answer to this question will perhaps become the more clear and satisfactory if we look first to the negative side of this doctrine, marking what it does *not* necessarily include.

First, then, the plenary or full inspiration of the Scriptures does not oblige us to suppose that all the *words* of Scripture are inspired. This was the case probably in some special instances. Thus the precepts of the Decalogue are said to have been written by the finger of God. Whatever this language may mean it must at least denote strong peculiarity as regards that part of the

Divine record. There may also have been some other special facts so communicated. But such instances were not frequent. It is true inspired men are said to deliver the 'word' of the Lord, and the 'words' of the Lord. But such terms are commonly used in Scripture to denote, not literal words, but doctrine—instruction. 'This is the *word* which by the *Gospel* is preached unto 'you.'* But there is one passage where the inspiration of the very words is supposed to have been affirmed. 'Which things also we speak, not in the words which 'man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy 'Ghost teacheth.'† But here the reference clearly is, not so much to mere words, as to language, style, manner of communication in its largest sense. The inspired writers were not to be men imitating the elaborate and artistic style of oratory or authorship with which the teachers of philosophy in the schools of those days were occupied, but were to be men whose language should be of the simple and natural description becoming their function. There *was* a Divine influence which affected the manner of the apostles as teachers, but it did so by affecting their character as men, imparting through that medium to everything they said and did the signs of naturalness and sincerity.

Had inspiration been extended to the words of Scripture it would have been extended with the same minuteness and precision to the circumstances of Scripture. In that case, those alleged discrepancies and contradictions, on which sceptics have dwelt with so much plausible exaggeration, would have been unknown. An influence which should have allowed no variation from fixed terms,

* Peter. † 1 Cor. ii. 13.

would have allowed no variation from fixedness in anything. In the Scriptures, however, we have substantial identity, with great verbal and circumstantial variety.

Furthermore, if this verbal theory, as it is called, be just, then translations of the Scriptures can hardly be said to be the word of God. If the inspiration be in the words, the original words are gone when the translation is made, for every scholar must know that to find words strictly equivalent in all cases is not possible. If the inspiration of Scripture be an inspiration of its *truth*, then we have the Bible in English, but if the inspiration be extended to words, then no existing nation has the Bible, or can have it.

It should be remembered also, that the New Testament writers do not cite the Old Testament with verbal accuracy, and that they often cite the Greek of the Septuagint, which was of purely human origin, in preference to the Hebrew. If the Jews were believers, as is alleged, in verbal inspiration, it is plain the evangelists and apostles did not mean to be understood as encouraging them in such a belief.

It is sometimes said that men of necessity think in words, and that both the thought and the terms thus come to be inspired together. But the fact is not so. We often think without words. In the history of language thought goes before words, and as the thinking of a people expands, their vocabulary grows and becomes more refined, so as to meet their new exigencies of thought.

But in fact the difference between the professed advocates of plenary inspiration and verbal inspiration, is by no means so great as the parties themselves often seem

to imagine. For the adherents to the verbal theory do not deny the varieties in diction, style, and other characteristics, by which the sacred writers are distinguished from each other. They admit and admire these varieties. They say God did not unmake the *man* when he made the *prophet*; but rather, consecrated the man, with everything belonging to his individuality, to his special function. But the individuality which existed before the inspiration came cannot be said to be created by inspiration. It may be guided or elevated by such influences, nothing more. Both parties are agreed, that the Holy Spirit adopts, uses, consecrates, the characteristics of the man to his special object; and in ceding thus much, the advocate of the verbal theory cedes all that seemed to be distinctive in his doctrine. The difference which remains is not a difference about ideas, but merely about modes of expression.

My next remark is, that belief in the full inspiration of Holy Scripture does not require us to suppose that the inspiration of inspired men is always the *same*, either in *mode* or *measure*. In this view of the subject there no doubt is much which passes our knowledge. Results and facts may be certain, while processes are far beyond the reach of our intelligence. But what we *may* know in relation to this subject we should aim to know. Inspiration is a form of miracle, and the Divine Being, we may be sure, does not resort to miracles without occasion, nor beyond occasion. If there be inspiration at all, it will be sufficient for its purpose, and it will be always determined by its purpose. Being so regulated, it may be an influence acting at one time on one faculty, at another time on another, and at times on the whole

susceptibility of the man, both mental and physical. Nothing can be more reasonable than to suppose that the cause in such cases would be limited to the intended effect. The contents of the Scripture sustain this view. Much that we find there could have been recorded as the effect of purely natural memory; while much beside is of such a nature as to imply the presence of the supernatural in the highest degree. Surely Paul did not need to be inspired after the same manner when requesting that his parchments should be brought to him, and when predicting the great apostacy, and the revelation of the Man of Sin. His natural memory gave him sufficient warrant to say that after his conversion he went for a time into Arabia; but much higher influences were needed to enable him to predict the order and characteristics of the resurrection. But to me, it is very plain, that whatever may have been the comparative passiveness of the mind of the sacred writers in some special instances, in general, their communications are made in the full exercise of their intelligent and spiritual consciousness.

The most limited sense in which the word inspiration can be used is as denoting mere *superintendence*. In such cases, the man acts with his natural freedom, but the spirit ensures that error shall not have place in his statements. *Divine guidance* includes something more than superintendence. This may aid the memory, and influence the selection of material. '*Revelations* of the 'Lord,' and the 'word of *prophecy*,' must have been the effect of the highest forms of inspiration. The special doctrines of Revelation—the Incarnation, the Atonement, the office of the Holy Spirit, are all facts which belong

to the supernatural. Reason may teach us something concerning the Divine perfections, but that those perfections should come into action after this manner, reason could never have foreseen. These are the things which it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive, 'but God,' says the apostle, 'hath *revealed* them unto us 'by his Spirit.' * Elsewhere Paul speaks of them as having come to him, 'not by man, but by *revelation* of 'Jesus Christ.' Concerning *prophecy*, everyone will know, that gift in that form must come from the Omniscient; and influence from that source only could have ensured that the doctrines of the Gospel should be so fully embraced by the apostles as to be communicated fully and without any mixture of error.

But we are not obliged to suppose that the minds which were thus alike inspired must of necessity see the great scheme of revealed truth from exactly the *same point of view*, or under exactly *the same lights*. Circumstances would arise which would dispose such minds to look at the parts and tendencies of the revealed message differently at different times. Its particular aspects as opposed to particular errors, would naturally come into prominence according to the exigency. This feature is observable through the greater part of the sacred writings. The passing incidents of days far remote have fixed their impress on the sacred page for all time to come.

But beyond this, the influence which left the sacred writers to differ from each other so much in style and general manner, left them free to differ in some things more considerable. We see this in the complexion of the Gospels. If each had been little else than a duplicate

* Cor.

of the rest, then one might have sufficed, and three would have been superfluous. It is true, grave exceptions have been taken to this variety, on the alleged ground that the Christ presented in these several narratives is not the same Christ, but different. If the difference had involved contradiction there would be weight in this objection, but that is not proved. As we have said elsewhere, we do not get our full conception of the character of our Lord from any one of the evangelists. To this end we need to read and collate them all. The evangelists, it is clear, were not obliged to look on the life of the Saviour from strictly the same ground. One might look on that marvellous history more in its external manifestations; another might be more intent upon its inner mysteries; and the two may have had their mission to do the work needing to be done between them. Be it remembered, too, that these natural varieties in the men employed to write the Scriptures, are varieties that will never cease to exist among the people who are expected to be readers of the Scriptures. In this way, not only does every mind get its own truth, so to speak, but gets it after its own manner. The Divine wisdom here tells us, that it is not in the one mode of any one of the inspired writers that we have what is best, but in the varieties of mode embraced by them all. In these varieties we have the destined fulness of Scripture—in these parts we have the whole. So the epistles of Paul and John give us the same Gospel, but not as seen from precisely the same point, or with the same things in strictly the same prominence. John is more intuitive, Paul is more logical, and this distinction runs through all they have written. Hence the one is a great favourite

with minds of a mystical tendency, the other with minds which must be able to render a reason. In James, the doctrinal element is very limited. In Peter, the doctrinal and the practical are more freely combined, and they meet in a similar measure in John, but Paul takes the wider range of doctrinal truth, and is busied in a manner of his own with the more robust and practical tendencies of the Christian system.

If even in their mode of presenting moral and religious truth, the inspired writers are thus far distinguishable from each other, it is easy to suppose that their manner when describing the same *historical circumstance* may partake of difference. We can easily imagine that one historian would be especially interested in one aspect of a story, and another in another. The feeling awakened, or the lessons suggested, by almost any incident, will hardly be the same in the experience of any two observers. Hence we can suppose that the feature of an incident almost overlooked by one writer, will often be that especially dwelt upon by another. In this way there might be great circumstantial variety, verging upon apparent contradiction, while in fact there is no contradiction, but merely variety. All this flows naturally from the fact that the Holy Spirit does not supersede the individuality of the sacred penmen, but adopts it.

It is also, I think, quite legitimate to say that the idea of inspiration does not require us to suppose that the historical statements of the Scripture will always be given in exact *chronological order*. History, in the scientific and philosophical form familiar to us was little known among the ancient Asiatic nations. The writings of this nature possessed by them were singularly fragmentary, consisting

for the most part of brief entries made from time to time in courtly or priestly registers. The marvel with us should be, not that the ancient Hebrew histories bear so small a resemblance in chronological arrangement and continuity of treatment to the classical models which have been handed down to us, but rather that the fragmentary and irregular are not really more observable than we find them. It is not probable that the inspired writers have been allowed to give us false dates, or false relations of cause and effect, but where the order of occurrences was of no religious or moral significance they often appear to have been indifferent about it. The Jewish modes of computation were not ours, and much apparent discrepancy has arisen from this circumstance. The Hebrew manner of notation too was not favourable to strict accuracy on the part of a transcriber.

Nor does it follow that where there is inspiration at all, it must be inspiration *without limit*. Each prophet in the old time had often his special message to deliver, and that deliverance being made his work for the time was done. Holy men spake *as* they were moved. They proclaimed the word of the Lord as the word came to them. It is said of our Lord that the Spirit was not given by measure unto Him. But that is not said of another. Even in his case, though the spirit given him was without measure, his teaching was measured. He gave forth truth to his disciples by little and little as they were able to bear it. On this same principle did the All-wise deal with our race in the early history of the world. He gave to the patriarchs and their descendants the truth convenient for them. But to put limit after this manner on the teaching of truth, is not, as some

obtuse people seem to have thought, to teach untruth. The light given, in so far as it comes, is pure light. The inspiration of the Old Testament was as real as the inspiration of the New, though its purpose was not to present truth with the same degree of clearness or fulness.

Not less manifest is it that the man inspired at *one time* may not be an inspired man at *all times*. The gift was not perpetual. Balaam was inspired once, but we have no reason to suppose that the same influence ever came upon him again. He had his vision as he looked on the tents of Israel from beside the altars of Moab; but that vision closed, the future was as impenetrable to him as to that king Balak who had sought his services. David was inspired as a psalmist, but we may doubt his inspiration when in his ode upon the death of Saul, he can be blind apparently to the errors of the dead king, and can attribute qualities to him partaking more of poetic license than of historical accuracy. So Deborah was inspired when in the name of the Lord she called Israel to arm against the oppressor; but she does not tell us that she was inspired when she wrote her song on the struggle after it was over, nor are we obliged to suppose that she was then so influenced. We may distinguish between Deborah as a poetess and Deborah as an inspired messenger. The former character was permanent, the latter occasional. Inspiration assures us that Deborah and David did thus write; it does not assure us that they so wrote under a divine guidance. In this sense there is a seal of inspiration given to all Scripture history, but a great part of it only in this sense. When the sacred writers describe certain things as said or done, we accept their statements as historically

correct, but we do not hold them as responsible for the truth of what is said, or for the rightness of what is done. Satan sometimes speaks in Holy Writ, and speaks even there as the father of lies might be expected to speak. When good men speak by the Spirit of God, they speak unerringly, but when they speak apart from that influence they err in common with other men. But it is in the Old Testament that this *occasional* inspiration is most observable.

It should be added finally, that the inspiration which ensured unerring truth to the *message* of the prophet, did not necessarily ensure the unerring to his *conduct*. Balaam could prophesy, but we know how he could sin. David could breathe forth the soul of an inspired devoutness, but we know how much there was in portions of his life at variance with that spirit. And what shall we say of Jonah? Even Peter, constantly inspired as we suppose him to have been as a teacher of truth, was rebuked of Paul because he was to blame, and there were some things even in the conduct of Paul which may be suspected of having flown from himself more than from a higher source.

To the thoughtful reader of the Bible these hints as to what the inspiration of the book does *not* necessarily include may have their uses.

But the question now comes—in what does inspiration really consist? To this question my answer is, that inspiration in the Scriptural sense, consists in the presence of a divine influence in the mind of the inspired person, sufficient to ensure *truthfulness* to the things set forth by him as truthful. Anything more definite than this I am not concerned to state, or even to know.

That the *theology* of the Scriptures is inspired is supposed by all who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures in any sense. It is obvious that a revelation would scarcely have been made at all if its purpose had been restricted to a mere reflection of existing human ideas and human feelings. Its object must be, not merely to give greater clearness and certainty to what is partially known, but to disclose the unknown. Before this oracle, accordingly, the attitude of the mind believing in inspiration will be that of a learner. Its natural intelligence and moral consciousness will not be ignored, but both will know how to take their place before such an authority. It is in vain to describe this theology, especially as set forth in the Pentateuch, as being so low, sensuous, and anthropomorphic as to be degrading to the Deity. Degrading as that dispensation of things may seem, its theism was such as no nation had attained to in those ages, and the place which it occupies in the history of religious thought I have shown elsewhere.* This system met the moral condition of man as no other had done, and aimed at its amelioration upon a scale, and by means, altogether its own. In the New Testament all this is especially conspicous, as I think I shall be able to show.

Men who dislike the theology of the Bible are hardly on better terms with its *morality*—but we have both the theology and the morality from an inspired source. The excellence, indeed, of the moral principles directly and formally inculcated in the Scriptures has been generally acknowledged. The difficulty has been to harmonise

* Sect. II.

particular facts with such principles. The Deluge, the destruction of the Cities of the plain, the slaughter of the priests of Baal in the time of Elijah, the imprecatory Psalms, and some other incidents of that nature are thought to militate against the idea that the Hebrew Scriptures are inspired.

In dealing with such objections it seems to me only just to say, that should a revelation be made to man, he has no more right to exact that it shall be free from all anomaly or moral difficulty, than he has to insist that what is called the light of nature shall be free from all things of that order. That the system of nature is not free from facts which occasion perplexity we all know and feel. The gift of a revelation will be sure to lessen the antecedent darkness, but it is not rational to expect that it should remove the darkness altogether. The fact that it does not affect to do so is a presumption in its favour. The sufferings inflicted by the Deluge, by the overthrow of Sodom, and by the army under Joshua, were great. But the sufferers were signally guilty, and there are laws in Providence which ensure, that whenever such corruptness shall come, a similar sweep of destruction shall follow. Whether the punishment provided in such cases shall come through the natural action of law, or by means of some special mandate given to some special agency, is a mere circumstance—in either case the ethical character of what is done is strictly the same. According to the theocratic character of the Hebrew government, idolatry was treason aggravated by impiety. Hence the severity of the penalties attached to it. It is only yesterday that our own penalties for

treason were too horrible to admit of description. The priests of Baal were eminently offenders of this class.

Concerning the imprecatory Psalms, it was important that the language of the men who speak in those productions should be such as to give us their real character, with its good and its not good. We are interested in knowing truly what religious life was in their case; and if they really felt as their language shows them to have felt, it was well that they should speak as they have spoken. But it does not follow that the Holy Spirit must be supposed to have approved of all their utterances while permitting them, nor that we should ourselves be prepared to express admiration of them because they came from such men. Much however might be said in extenuation, and even in vindication of their language, partly on the ground of the rudeness of the times, which would be sure to furnish instances of wrong that no hand should spare; and partly because we do not know how much of what was said should be taken as being rather prophetic than historical, pointing to the enemies of Christ and of his church through what was present and personal. It is certain that some passages of this description are cited in the New Testament as having this ultimate meaning.* We know not all the conditions possible to inspiration. Even in our case, it is important to remember that justice and mercy belong equally to the Divine nature, and that they should both have place in our own. Some people would make religion to consist in the exercise of the softer affections only, to the neglect of all dispositions of a firmer mould. Hence the strange

* Psalms cxix. 55, cix. 8; Acts i. 20; Psalms xxii. 22, cxvii. 22; Acts iv. 11.

sights we sometimes witness, crowds of people full of all sorts of pity for those who rob houses and cut throats, and with no sort of pity apparently for those whose houses have been ransacked, and whose lives have been taken. The old Hebrew form of piety, which not only loved mercy, but hated iniquity, was much nearer the true standard than this morbid sentimentalism often found among ourselves. They were, no doubt, rude and harsh things, those old Hebrew laws, but they were a rude and harsh race who were to be governed by them. The great mystery with me, is not that the laws were rigorous, but that God's rational creatures should be anywhere in a condition to need such laws.

But what of the *history* and *science* of Scripture, must these be accepted as inspired and truthful?

Concerning sacred history, it should be remembered, that supposing the sacred writers to have been inspired at all, no reason can be assigned from the nature of the case against the idea of their being inspired in regard to the history they give us, as well as in regard to their general teaching. For reasons to be mentioned presently, we can understand why they should not have been inspired to become our preceptors, more than very partially, in matters of natural science; but of the common facts in history they were as capable of judging then as we are now, and while we fail to see any reason for their being left to fall into serious error in that quarter, very weighty reasons suggest the importance of their being secured against it.

It is a material fact also, that some nineteen-twentieths of the religious truth which comes to us in Scripture comes to us through the medium of history and bio-

graphy. From this fact it is clear that the Bible was designed to be a popular book, and no less clear that its biography and history should be accepted as substantially trustworthy. To suppose that such a medium of communication should have been chosen to such an extent, and to suppose at the same time that this medium has been left exposed to the chances of every sort of error, would be to impeach something more than the Divine wisdom.

It may be said, indeed, that the case is not exactly so, that even in this view, sacred history is as veracious as history in general, and that the evidence which is sufficient to warrant faith in other histories, should be sufficient to induce faith in this history. But what shall be said of the instances in which the sacred historians profess to give us information that could not have been given by purely natural means? Genesis gives us a history of Creation, which no man could have witnessed, or have known anything about, except by revelation. John gives us discourses from the lips of the Saviour which could not possibly have been given with accuracy from mere memory. So in many cases. Is it too much to say, that if Moses and John were not inspired witnesses in so writing, they are no witnesses? In such instances, sacred history must be more than other histories, or it is less.

It will perhaps be said, that though the documents of various kinds from which so much of the narrative portions of Scripture appears to have been taken were not generally inspired documents, still the men who made use of such materials were inspired men, and in this way, what has come from their hands, has come on

inspired authority. If by this be meant, that the compiler of the Book of Genesis, or of the Gospel bearing the name of Luke, was so inspired that he could separate readily between the true and the not true in the sources of information open to him, giving us as the result only what may be accepted as really truthful, then all that is required by the advocates of a plenary inspiration is ceded. In this manner a large portion of scripture history has no doubt come to us; but if this sufficient inspiration in the compiler be denied, we are then left to no little uncertainty.

This uncertainty, however, were we really shut up to it, should not be admitted as fatal to our faith as Christians. Far from it. No intelligent and candid man will hesitate to admit that there are apparent discrepancies in the Gospels, and apparent errors in the early Hebrew Scriptures. How this has come to pass is a question for criticism. But my faith as a Christian is not dependent on the issues of that criticism. The uncertain, or the apparently untrue, that may be brought together by such means, is as the dust of the balance compared with the true and the certain in the other scale, and where the beam turns after that manner, belief becomes rational—imperative. If inspiration did not extend to the historical element in Scripture so fully as I am disposed to think it did, it is clear to me that the influences, natural or supernatural, which came upon the sacred writers, were sufficient to render them so far trustworthy as to make the faith we are wont to repose in them a reasonable service. The difficulty which I cannot explain is the rare exception; the certainty I can seize as such is the rule; and it would be something

much worse than weakness to allow the mass of certainty to be neutralised by particular instances of a different nature. Let it be conceded that there are slight errors in these writings, from the negligence of transcribers, or from other causes, and that we know not exactly how to rectify them. Still, truth is there in a degree a hundred-fold greater. As I should be a believer in Christ if Paul were my only teacher, so I could believe in Judaism, though the book of Psalms or the prophecies of Isaiah were my only guides in that direction. I am concerned that the basis of my faith should be as broad as possible, but were it thus narrowed I should still be a believer. It is manifest enough that not a few of the persons who insist that the inspiration of the Bible was thus limited do so with an ulterior object. Their antagonism is not really to the history of the book, but to its theology—to its claim to be accepted in any sense as a revelation. Let its history and science be surrendered, and the citadel beyond, it is presumed, must soon fall. But these men deceive themselves. The stand that could and would be made on the more inward lines of defence would be such as to task their resources through many a day to come.

With regard to the SCIENCE of the Bible, it should be remembered that the record is not responsible for the notions of uninspired men on that subject. The errors of such men belong to history, and as so much history, they may be given in the page of inspiration without detracting at all from its authority. In this sense, the science of the Bible should be the science of the times in which the Bible was written, presenting its truth and error, whatever they may be. It is not too

much to say, that to be true as history, it must be in a great degree false as science. The sacred writers speak of the sun as rising and setting. It would be marvellous if they did not. We do so ourselves. In our poetry, and even in our humblest prose, we take our illustrations from nature as it *appears*, more than from nature as it really is. Is it strange that it should so have been with the Hebrew of more than three thousand years ago; and that even the more scientific statements of his inspired guides should be tinged much more with his error than with our truth? In fact, the language in this connection by which we moderns are so often offended, is language, in many an instance, which should induce conviction rather than scepticism.

Nothing can be more irrational than to seem to say, that Moses and the prophets could not have been inspired to become our teachers in religion, without being qualified to stand abreast with the discoveries of a Newton or a Davy in natural philosophy. Had the Bible anticipated modern science after that manner, it could never have obtained credence among the people to whom it was first addressed; and, as a consequence, it could never have come to our hands. Nay more, in that case, in place of coming in so as to harmonise with the law of progress pervading the scheme of Providence, it would have come in as a disturbance of that law, and disturbance in this connection must have been disaster.

In the records of the Creation and of the Deluge we no doubt have, in substance, historical and scientific truth. But it is truth given in a form which is not a little perplexing to us, from its being adapted to the apprehension of races of men whose views in regard to

physical science were widely different from our own. It was not possible that a description in strict accordance with the science of our time should have been credible, or even intelligible, to the men of that time. That it might be truth to the minds of men in those days, it was inevitable that it should be in many respects very obscure truth, and even apparent untruth, to our minds. When this subject is viewed dispassionately and intelligently, the marvel is, not that the difference between the science of the Pentateuch and our own should be such as it seems, but rather that the substantial agreements between the two should be such as we find. We learn from Moses that matter is not eternal. We learn from him something as to the successive stages in the process of creation; something as to the date of man's connection with the earth; and something as to the early races of men, and their destined migrations; in all of which we have elements of scientific reality of great value, and such as science and history have since largely corroborated. The capacity of the Ark, the extent assigned to the Deluge, and what followed when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, are matters which involve more than I can explain; but I can believe that there is a sense here in which the things written were true, and if that sense should not seem to be discoverable now, the concealment may have been designed as a wholesome test to human intelligence and docility during this probationary state. Faith is not a necessity. It is purely voluntary. It is from our moral nature, and it will be tested as everything in our moral history will be tested. The flood of light which satisfies me that God 'made known his ways unto Moses,' satisfies me

that these hard places in those ancient writings have their truth and meaning, and I do not feel it to be necessary to the vigour of my spiritual life that I should be able to discern that truth and meaning, whatever they may be.

In the early part of this enquiry we have endeavoured to realise the moral condition of man, and his need of a religious teaching and a religious help, such as the present scheme of nature and Providence is not found to supply. The presumption from this retrospect has been, that there is a revelation somewhere, designed to meet this great want of humanity. We have seen also something of the confluence of evidence tending to show that Moses was what he claimed to be; that Christ was what he claimed to be; and that the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures present a faithful record concerning this special intervention of Divine goodness in behalf of our race.

But there are men, it seems, who can persuade themselves that Moses was no more to the Hebrews than Numa was to the Romans; that Christ is no more to Christians than Mohammed is to Mohammedans; and that to come into the world and to go out of it, knowing nothing as to why we are sent hither, or whither we are going, though not quite pleasant, is not a state of things that should be allowed to prevent our enjoying life while it is in our hands. Such are the conclusions in which some men seek rest. But it is difficult to suppose that they have found what they seek.

It is not a small matter that such lines of evidence as have been presented in these pages should be resisted; and that a host of incredible things which must be ac-

cepted before this can be done should be credited. To me that course is impossible. I cannot be sceptical on the scale required upon the one hand, and I cannot be credulous on the scale required upon the other. Faith in Christ is easy, compared with believing the things I must believe before I can reject his claims upon me. I cannot begin with Moses and descend to all the prophets, and reject all the signs of a Divine presence that dwelt among them. I cannot read the Gospels and suppose the writers of them to have been fools or knaves. It is simply impossible that I should regard the great subject of those narratives as nothing better than a well-meaning visionary, resolved to dream on, though at the cost of his life; and it is not within my power to think of the apostle Paul as a fine specimen of the fanatic and nothing more. But all this, and a hundred things like this, I must do before I could feel that it would be rational in me to abandon my faith in Christ. In this faith I have rest, and my intelligent and moral nature assure me that I am shut up to it by evidence which a Divine hand has placed around me. So far, however, we have been concerned mainly with the *fact* of a Divine revelation, it behoves us now to look somewhat closely to its contents. These present the remedy provided against the disorders which we feel to be within us and around us.

SECTION V.

THE INCARNATION.

MEN in general do not often venture into the region of abstraction. They content themselves with the seen, or if they look higher, it is only to gaze in imagination on the invisible as a reflection of the visible, or as some elevated form of it. Eternity and immensity are ideas which never enter common minds without filling them with bewilderment and dismay, and it must be confessed that they are inscrutable mysteries even to the most intellectual. Our idea of the Divine Being as existing from eternity and as filling all space, seems to preclude the possibility of our apprehending his nature as that of a person and a Father. If we are to conceive of him under either of these aspects, it seems indispensable that he should cease to be immense, and to be wholly spiritual. All the communities of the earth have felt this difficulty, and left to grapple with it alone, have fallen under it. As before stated, they have none of them been the worshippers of such a God as an object attained by the action of their own thought. Monotheism everywhere may be traced to authority, never to pure reason. Mohammedanism is not an exception. Mohammedanism

is eminently historical. Mohammed is only one prophet coming in the wake of a long line of prophets. Inspiration—a Divine commission, as he maintained, made him what he was.

Hence in heathen nations, very few, even among the most intelligent and speculative classes, keep clear of the great vortex of creature worship. In general, the most refined and the most rude surrender themselves to it. Their worship is not that of one God, but of 'gods 'many and lords many.' Such too were the affinities of this course of things in the old world, that the Romans found, or imagined they found, their own gods everywhere. The gods of the West were more humanised than those of the East, but in the elemental powers attributed to them they possessed much in common, and those coincidents were enough to satisfy the unspeculative genius of the Romans that the gods of all the nations were of a common origin, known under different names, and worshipped after divers manners. The monster forms of the Oriental divinities were all symbolic, designed to indicate their respective qualities and operations. The Greeks and Romans allied symbols of that nature with their deities, but they did so within smaller limits, and more gracefully. In their case, the elemental powers were always subordinate to the human skill which guided them. But all had their gods supposed to preside over sea and land, life and death—in short over everything.

With us, nothing seems more natural than that we should avoid such follies. But how has this difference come to exist? It cannot be that our general intelligence is so far in advance of that which prevailed through the

best days of the Roman empire as to have created the new atmosphere of thought on such matters. We all know that it is Christianity which has wrought this great mental revolution, and Christianity did not rest its claims on metaphysics. It did indeed make its appeal to the moral nature of man, and promised to regenerate it, but its claim to be accepted as thus potent was founded on the 'signs and wonders' which identified it with the Divine power. The idea that the nations of the earth may some day return to the simple light of nature, and become nations of wise and virtuous deists, is a fabric of the fancy—facts lend it no sanction. Men who so speculate have ascended to their higher region of illumination by the ladder of Revelation, and now the ladder has served its purpose they would fain kick it away. Could we remove what Christian thought has done for the world, and place men once more face to face with nature, as in the old time, we have evidence enough about us that the worship of 'heroes' and of 'genius,' and of the elemental forces under symbolic forms, would soon rush in like a flood to fill up the void.

Of the strong tendency to error in this direction still rooted in human nature, we see a striking illustration in the history of Romanism. Romanism is avowedly Christian. It should, accordingly, be pledged strongly against all creature worship—any semblance to it we might suppose would be scrupulously avoided. But is it so? If we look at Romanism as it is generally and practically, it is hardly too much to say that it is a religion without God, and a Christianity without Christ. In that system the Deity is a remote, mysterious, and awful existence, hardly to be in any way approached by

mortals. Even the Son may be said to be feared more than trusted. Saints who have shared, not only in the natural, but in the sinful infirmities of their votaries, are regarded with more confidence as intercessors; and beyond all, the womanly heart of Mary is supposed to be the most full of pity, so that it has come to be thought a sign of advanced piety that prayer should be offered, not to the Father, but to saints, not to Christ chiefly, but to Mary. These facts show the deep and strong tendency in human nature to drop down from the infinite to the finite, from the divine to the human—in other words, into the worship of the created to the exclusion of the Creator."

We bear somewhat hardly on the philosophers and priests of heathen nations when we describe them in mass as willing that the people should be so religiously ignorant as we find them, and subject to so many superstitious delusions. It may be doubted if there was a single philosopher or priest in Athens, in her best days, who did not honestly believe that the popular religion was on the whole as enlightened as the people could appreciate and bear. The man who should have attempted to lift the mind of the populace, even in Athens, above all faith in their accredited deities, to faith in the One Eternal, all-creating, and all-perfect Being, would, I suspect, have been deemed a person that should not have been allowed to go abroad without a keeper. The idea that the common mind could be trained to the conception of such a Being, and to the exercise of such simple faith in him, had no place among the thoughts of the wisest in those days. Judaism indeed had shown this to be possible. Prophets had long since enun-

ciated their doctrine concerning the Divine nature; and what was more, not a few of the poorest and humblest of the Hebrew people had learnt to make the Holy One their refuge and strength in every time of trouble. In this view, the Book of Psalms is the most wonderful book in the world. The filial trust, the filial hope and gladness, with which good men—the worshipping people of those days, pour forth their praise and prayer as in the presence of the Eternal, comes down to us as a beautiful stream of light through those dark and far-off times. The philosophy of the old world never appreciated the common mind so as to see it possible that the religion of a nation should ever take such a type. Of what had come to pass among the Hebrews little was known, and from that quarter only could such an idea have come. Christianity looked to the human spirit in its essential attributes, and could hope to see it raised from the lowest level to the highest. The marvellous reach in advance which was thus made in relation to the history of mind on the earth,—in the real education of the world, we none of us understand more than partially.

But in the history of religion apart from the direct or indirect action of Revelation, we see enough to warrant the impression, that if the nations of the world are ever to be brought to an intelligent worship of the Infinite, they must attain to that devotion by passing through the human to the divine. Some created medium seems to be indispensable if man is to become the worshipper of the Creator. The wing of his intelligence cannot soar sufficiently to reach that object unless thus aided. Ancient heathenism had the world before it, knew that it must have been made, and saw that it was governed,

and it distributed this work of creation and government between various powers, who were all represented, more or less, in the human form. It was easier, it would seem, to think of many limited agencies than of one as unlimited; and it is evident that it was congenial to human thought that these many agencies should be known under the human form, or under forms mainly of that nature. In all this we see man, the human, accepted as the highest image of the Divine.

Deep as the error may have been which underlay those old idolatries, is it not probable that there was a great truth at the root of them? In error as commonly before us, we see, not so much a simple opposition to truth, as a corruption of it. Error is rarely pure falsehood, it is in most cases a misapprehension, an exaggeration, or a perversion of something which is not false. Bishop Whately finds Romanism in human nature, and for the most part in the good that is in human nature, but in that good pushed to extremes. It is good to reverence sacred places—but that should have its limit. It is good to do homage to saints and martyrs—but that too should have its limits. So of everything. Hence it is good to endeavour to see the uncreated in the created, indeed it is our only way of attaining to such knowledge, but it is not good to halt in admiration of the created so as to forget the Creator.

Considerations of the kind thus far indicated, lead me to expect that if man is ever to be raised to the perfection of his nature, becoming all that he should be in relation to God and the universe, it will be under influences in which divine manifestations through humanity will be very conspicuous. The great I AM will not

speak to us immediately lest we die. He will not come in the tempest or in the fire, but in the still small voice.* The monotheism of the Hebrews was not realised without the aid of a strong humanistic element. We see this element very significantly in the first promise. 'I 'will put enmity between thee and the woman, between 'thy seed and her seed; thou shalt bruise his heel, but 'he shall bruise thine head.'† In this promise we have the root of all the promises. It presents in a symbolic form the great struggle between good and evil, of which the earth was to become the theatre, and it predicts the issue of that struggle. The victor at last is to be the seed of the woman—a human victor. Hence he may *suffer*. His heel will be bruised. But the vanquished is to be vanquished utterly—his head shall be struck, and the hand to strike that blow will be a human hand. So remarkable a prediction was not to be forgotten. It was not only to be heard through the tents of Shem in the coming ages, it was to reappear in many forms in the homes of Japhet, and was not to be wholly unknown to the descendants of Ham.

The language of the Old Testament as directed against image worship was stern, and even terrible. But creation, though it was not to be worshipped, was to be observed, studied, and the thoughts of the devout were to ascend above the heavens which 'declared the glory of God' to God himself. Providence too, was not to be a piece of mechanism, but was to be seen as consisting of evolutions emanating from an ever-acting intelligence, that intelligence being in itself a unity, though acting through agencies which were manifold—innumerable.

* 1 Kings xix. 10–12. † Gen. iii. 15.

Thus intermediate objects—images of the Divine skill and power, are everywhere about us as media through which the Invisible is ever becoming visible to those who are willing to see, and audible to those who are willing to hear.

It is refreshing to mark the power and beauty with which these old Hebrews set forth the nature and the deeds of the God in whom they trusted. 'Talk no more 'so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of 'your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and 'by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty 'men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded 'with strength. The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he 'bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The 'Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low 'and he lifteth up. He will keep the feet of his saints, 'and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by 'strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the 'Lord shall be broken in pieces; out of heaven shall he 'thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of 'the earth.'* So in milder and not less beautiful words speaks the Psalmist. 'He appointed the moon for sea-'sons, the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest 'darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the 'forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their 'prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, 'they gather themselves together, and lay them down in 'their dens; man goeth forth unto his work and his labour 'until the evening. Oh! Lord how manifold are thy 'works, in wisdom hast thou made them all—the earth 'is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea 'wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and

* 1 Sam. i. 3–10.

'great beasts. There go the ships, there is that leviathan 'whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all 'upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in 'due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou 'openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou 'hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their 'breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou send-'est forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest 'the face of the earth. I will sing unto the Lord as long 'as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have 'my being. My meditation on him shall be sweet; I 'will be glad in the Lord.'* So, to the devout in those days, the universe was an incarnation of the Divine. God was in it all, looking out through it upon his creatures, speaking to them, and blessing them.

If the God who discourses thus to men through nature and providence, shall discourse to us through a special revelation, it is only reasonable to expect that it will be through many intervening agencies used for that purpose. Matter has its mission as helping to link spirit in us with his spirit. Who shall say when a special and higher communication is to be made, what special and higher medium shall be chosen to convey it? In the early ages of the world the 'voice' or 'word' of God came at times in some direct way to men. But in many instances celestial natures are seen to have assumed the human form that they might discharge their errand to mortals. And when peoples were to be addressed, the message passed through the mind of some inspired prophet, who was to be to them in the place of God. Between the people and Jehovah in such instances,

* Psalm civ.

there were the media of a human language, and of a human intelligence qualified for the high service which devolved upon it. Men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—that is, they were possessed by the Divine that they might deliver the Divine truly to the human. In all these forms we trace a humanistic element employed to secure a hallowed commerce between the spiritual in man and the God who is a Spirit.

Nor is this all—What shall we say concerning the doctrine of Scripture as to the Office of the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption? That all real sanctity in man comes from this influence is the doctrine of both Testaments. In some respects, the theology of the Old Testament is obscure and restricted compared with the New. But on this point the book of Psalms is as explicit as the epistles of Paul. The recorded prayers of good men show this clearly. 'Create in me a clean heart, oh 'God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not 'away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit 'from me.'* 'Search me, oh God, and know my heart, 'try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any 'wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'† 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous 'things out of thy law.'‡ Thus men who would be wise looked for wisdom by a Divine illumination; and men who would be pure looked for purity from the same source. Everywhere the goodness of the good man is regarded as coming to him from the Fountain of all Goodness. In the New Testament all that is characteristic of the renewed mind is described as the fruit of the Spirit, and as the effect of his influence who worketh in

* Psalms li. 10, 11. † Psalms cxxxix. 23, 24. ‡ Psalms cxix. 15.

man 'to will and to do according to his good pleasure.' This influence, too, it must be remembered, is not merely occasional, but permanent. It begins with conversion, and continues until the Divine image is fully restored to the soul.

The Incarnation is felt by many minds as a great mystery. But man has demonstrated through his wide and protracted history that if our nature is ever brought into a satisfactory relation with the divine nature, it must be by some means of this complexion. The human must be the way of ascent to the Divine. And as to mystery, think of all the mysterious things that have been done to bring about this natural fellowship between man and his Maker. The Deity comes into the whole system of nature and providence that he may speak wholesome words to us there; he comes in old time with man's voice to man for this end; he comes near us through angelic natures taking upon them our form and speech; he comes by inspired prophets, lifting them into regions of supernatural vision; he comes amidst stupendous miracles, such as shake the earth and veil the heavens; and he comes by his Spirit, sent to dwell in the hearts of good men, and to become, I had almost said, incarnate with them, that they may be saved. In the face of all these facts must it still be incredible to us that Jesus, the Christ, is in the highest sense the Son of God? Many facts seem adapted to prepare us for this great fact. Many analogies assuredly tend that way.

All through the history and prophecy of the Old Testament we can trace this idea—the human is to have its advent in alliance with conditions and attributes essentially divine, and the work achieved by the great De-

liverer is to be such as Divine perfection only could realise. Reconciliation between man and God is to be completed, and this spiritual revolution is to be brought about by the joint action of Deity and humanity—by Deity and humanity as having become one in the God-man, Jesus Christ. This advent, and this work, were not seen by good men in Hebrew history as they are seen by us. It was by no means expedient that it should so be. That the fulfilment of prophecy may be involuntary on the part of those who contribute to it, and so evince the presence of Omniscience, it was necessary that its meaning when promulgated should not be apprehended more than imperfectly. The seed of the woman was to come. It became known subsequently that this seed would come through Abraham, and in this great descendant of the patriarch all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. This promised one, whose day Abraham foresaw; this star that should arise out of Jacob; this greater prophet than Moses, whom Moses was moved to predict; this king in Zion, who was to be David's son and David's lord; this Messenger of the Covenant, who was to come to His temple, to purify the sons of Levi and to do his mighty works there; this man of sorrows, who was to make his soul an offering for sin, and was to see his seed, to prolong his days, and to find the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hand; and this great earthly history in which so much of the high and low, of suffering and triumph were to be combined—in all this we see a stream of light and expectancy which never ceased to be allied with a living faith in the Jewish church. To the last, and amidst the floods of carnality and formalism then prevalent, there were those who were waiting for this 'Consolation of Israel.'

Is it marvellous then that in a dispensation so full of God, and of God connecting himself so variously and so closely with man, the great ultimate fact should be the Incarnation? Voices from heathendom prepare us for such an event, and voices through revelation prepare us for it still more. The visitant who, according to prophecy, was to be the glory of his people Israel, had become, through an inarticulate sense of need in the Gentile world, the 'desire of all nations.' The great want of the world was, one in our midst who should reveal all that we need to know concerning the moral character of God in a real life; who should show us in his own person what humanity may be; and who should make known to us the way by which we might regain the lost perfection of our nature.

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. — That our Lord should be able to say *that* is a great end realised by the Incarnation. Concerning the manner in which the divine is present with the human in Christ we have no knowledge, we only know that it is so present that men are required to honour the Son even as they honour the Father. The fact of the union of the two natures is affirmed, the mode of it is no part of revelation. It is affirmed also that the moral and spiritual elements seen in the character of Christ, are those of the Father. 'Philip 'saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth 'us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with 'you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He 'that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest 'thou then—show us the Father? Believest thou not 'that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The 'words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but

'the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 'Believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me: 'or else believe me for the very work's sake.' * It is not needful to my object that I should attempt a minute exposition of this remarkable Scripture. It is sufficient for my purpose that it affirms identity of character between the Father and the Son, so that whosoever knows the Son knows the Father.

We have seen something of the difficulty of combining the idea of personality with the ideas of Omnipresence and Immensity. Man is not now left to complain. 'Oh that I knew where I might find him. Behold I go 'forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I 'cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth 'work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on 'the right hand that I cannot see him.' † God in Christ is not God thus lost in infinite space, eluding all creature search—he is in Christ, and Christ is present to us in every act of faith. The old distance between the finite and the Infinite has ceased to be. We feel when we look on the face of nature that there is another face on which we would fain look if it were permitted. We hear voices above and around us, but there is one voice beyond all that we crave to listen to if it might be. Oh for a living countenance on which we might gaze as on the expression of the Divine! Oh for a voice to the tones of which we might hearken as to those of the Invisible! Would that the Infinite might dwell with us, though but for a season, conforming himself to our ways, so that through some manifestation of human

* John xiv. 8–14. † Job xxiii.

sympathy our human hearts might learn to cling to him in childlike trust and love!

Well, all this has been done in Christ. In him we have the image—the express image of the Divine Personality. In all his manifestations to us we see, not merely self-manifestation, but the manifestation of the Father who sent him. What a help to our unsteady thoughts, to our feeble and unsettled emotions, to be able to place ourselves in his presence, and while gazing on that human countenance to feel that it is the Divine that is beaming upon us through those human features, and that is breathed upon us in the subdued and tender utterances that fall upon us from those lips. We see, or think we see, what we may hope for from Christ, and the assurance that everything we can expect from him we may expect from the Father also, is an assurance of a wonderful import. If it be so, then truly we can hope, hope and find rest. We are no longer far off from God, we are at his feet. He is no longer the unknown God—we see him, we hear his words, and feel the thrill of his human sympathy passing in vibration through our inner nature.

The Incarnation has done all this. Nothing else could have done it. Even the feeblest intellect is found strong enough to apprehend not a little of the spiritually great and beautiful to be seen in Christ; while the thought of God as eternal, everywhere, and limitless, would leave such minds perplexed and unmoved. Hearts breaking with grief, find it possible to look to that heart which is seen as the heart of the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and can hope for pity there when all hope of it elsewhere has gone. Wonderful links of influence

thus come into action between earth and heaven. God is felt to be truly 'with us:' and we can walk with God. So far as our conceptions and experience on such subjects extend, we may say that no such habit of loving trust in God could have been realised among men by any influence save that which has realised it—the influence of love Incarnate. This is the Divine remedy against idolatry—against all creature worship. Men *should* have looked up through nature to God, but left to themselves they have not done so. But it has been shown on a large scale that they can look up through the created in Christ to the Uncreated. He knew this well who said, 'and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men 'unto me.'

From the fact that teaching from the lips of Christ is teaching coming to us from a nature of so much greatness and goodness, two things follow which are very observable. First, there is a tone of authority in the manner of the teacher such as no other instructor had ever assumed; and further—when his lessons are pronounced, the test of discipleship is made to consist, not so much in a professed reception of those lessons, as in a sincere attachment to his person. Other teachers base their instruction on scientific reasoning. Jesus never does so. His maxims are prefaced by the words—I say unto you—and those words uttered, discussion is at an end. In this fact we have a new thing in the earth—an event which must be history, it could never have been invention. Christ did, beyond doubt, attach great importance to the truth which he delivered. 'Whosoever 'heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will 'liken him unto a wise man—and whosoever heareth

'these sayings of mine and doeth them not, I will liken 'him unto a foolish man.' 'If you continue in my 'word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and you shall 'know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' But there are other words which we cannot forget. Whoso- 'ever loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy 'of me.' 'If a man love me I will love him, and my Father 'will love him.' 'If ye love me keep my commandments.' 'Simon Peter son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' 'Whoso- 'ever will lose his life for *my* sake, the same shall 'save it.' How startling would such language have been as coming from the lips of a philosopher however virtuous or even from an inspired prophet however holy! But how fitting as coming from one who could declare himself the Son of God, and who could appeal to his own all-surpassing love and self-sacrifice as the ground on which this demand of personal affection was made. The disciples—the early Christians generally, all felt that he who made this demand had a right to make it. 'Lord, 'thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be 'anathema maranatha.' You may win men to a good cause for its own sake—place that cause in the hands of a good leadership, combining personal attachment with rational enthusiasm, and you win them tenfold. All the teachings of Christ were embodied in the wisdom and goodness of his nature, so that to love him was to love the great centre of unity which embraced everything. The love of goodness must be goodness, outward attempts at conformity to it may be hypocrisy.

But Christ not only shows to us what God is, he shows to us what *man may be—should be*. The testimony

of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ is, not merely that he was truly man, but that he was perfect man. This, as we have seen, he affirms himself; this was affirmed by the voice from heaven; and it is affirmed once and again by men who spake as the Holy Spirit moved them.

The great principles of moral government require that the creature should give his heart supremely to the Creator, and that his feeling and action towards his fellow-creatures should be such as he would that their feeling and action should be towards himself. These principles are the grand links essential to the harmony of the spiritual universe. There is no greatness of being without them. No beauty of being without them. All blessedness flows from them.

But simple as these principles may seem to be, the character they would form if fully acted upon, is a result which we nowhere see in this world, and which we certainly are not likely to apprehend until we do so see it. Our good men give us degrees and forms of goodness. Complete goodness, and completeness in relation to all the aspects of goodness, they are far from presenting to us. We lack, more or less, the nice adjustment of qualities which gives fulness and symmetry to the whole. Strength in one man degenerates into harshness. Tenderness in another becomes feebleness and insipidity. So in instances without end. What a perfect man would be in this world we can imagine in part, but the object is really beyond our knowledge. We cannot anticipate it. The reality must be left to disclose it.

In Christ we have this reality. The discovery is made in him. We see in him what a created nature must be

when entirely animated and moulded by the holy, the just, and the good. No system of principles or lessons could have enabled us to see the possible to humanity as we see it in Jesus Christ. Descriptions of goodness may be true and beautiful; but goodness—perfect goodness, as embodied in a real life, must have a truth and beauty of its own. Our conception in the former case becomes ours by an intellectual process, in the latter it comes to us as if by intuition. We open our eyes upon reality. We see and believe. Need I say which of these sources of knowledge is best adapted to instruct, to impress—to edify men? What humanity would become if it gave to God the things that are God's, and to man the things that are his, we see in Christ. In him, the grandeur and beauty of heaven walked the earth. In him the kingdom of God had come down to men. What heaven must be we see in one who has come from heaven. What the angels are we may know, by observing him who is perfect as they are perfect. The glory into which he ascended after death was the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.*

But this vision comes to us in a still richer light. The spiritually great and beautiful in Jesus, were—on grounds of the deepest significance—special to him. No pure being was ever so tried. No sinless nature ever so suffered. Creature obedience in him was perfected, not merely in the ordinary circumstances in which created natures manifest their perfection, but in circumstances which tried goodness as it had never been tried before. The homelessness, the poverty, the hostilities of men and of infernal powers, and other mysterious

* John xvii. 4, 5.

sources of grief to which his pure and susceptible nature was exposed, all were allowed so to attest his faith, and his affection towards God and man, as to give to his nature a place apart, not only from ours, but from that of all other natures. The virtues of an angel may be high and Godlike, but they have never been tried as the virtues of humanity in Christ were tried. Never was innocence purer than his innocence, never was sorrow like unto his sorrow. In a sense, he felt the world's evil in the world's stead. He bore the burden humanity should have borne. Hence the scene in the garden. Hence the cry upon the cross. His suffering was not mere suffering. We can see, for the greater part at least, that it was suffering inseparable from the course of action by which a great spiritual deliverance was to be achieved. He suffered because he was to live a life of poverty; because he came to bear witness to truth in a world that had cast it off; because to live a pure life, and discharge such a mission in such a world, was to be exposed to the malice of men and demons; and because it was his wish to do a homage to the true, the just, and the good, that should be so transcendent as to form a basis on which the guilty might be pardoned, the lost saved. No created nature had ever been called to a service of that order. Only the Incarnation could have placed humanity before us under such lights. No marvel, accordingly, that when Jesus ascends to heaven it is to take a place high above all the thrones and dominions known there. Among all created natures humanity has thus become the loftiest, so that to Christ every knee is to bow, and every tongue is to confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The effect of the Incarnation in relation to our nature as assumed by Christ, is hardly more remarkable than the effect of it *in relation to ourselves.* Nothing is more observable and characteristic in the career of our Lord, than the manner in which he estimates man as man, wholly apart from all the distinctions of rank, wealth, and culture. In this respect, human nature has been made to rise to a higher place in the universe since the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We never find Jesus aiming to place himself in the way of the high and haughty portions of the community. The taunt might be flung abroad right and left of him. 'Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in 'him?—this people, who know not the law are cursed.' Such things moved him not. We find him almost invariably in the midst of this despised and proscribed class. If any among them would do his will, they were assured that they should be to him as his sister and brother. We see enough in the ignorance, the follies, and the graver failings of such people to dispose us to live as far as may be wholly apart from them. But what are we compared with the Immaculate One? What do we see of the qualities of evil compared with what he saw? And what a picture, when thus viewed, has he placed before us! Only through the Incarnation could such condescension have been possible. Christ evidently possessed the secret of seeing something to pity, something to warrant hope, something even to love, where only a Divine goodness could see it; and as Christians become Christ-like, they give signs of being blessed in their measure with the same spiritual insight.

The fact of the Incarnation gives its special impress

to the fact of redemption. The regeneration to be accomplished by this means, is to be an elevation of the human soul to the image of the second Adam, not a restoration of it to the image of the first. What the moral condition of the first man was is but imperfectly known to us. We see that God pronounced his nature to be very good. But we see also that the first pressure of temptation was enough to break down all the moral fences of his being, and to carry him away captive. We cannot entertain a very exalted idea of the intelligence and force of a nature of which this may be said. „

Widely different is our conception of humanity in Christ. He comes, not into a paradise which no sin has tainted, but into a world saturated with evil. He comes, not to be exposed to one feeble temptation, but to a confluence of every form of temptation which the spirit of evil in the universe could bring to bear upon him. He is to be perfect, in the high sense of perfection which belongs to one made perfect through sufferings. The good so transcendent in him, is good realised through a conflict with evil—a conflict which might be regarded as the hinge of destiny to all things. The powers of light and darkness met in deadly encounter in the history of the Redeemer, and the issue was to determine the rule of the future—whether it should be the rule of Good or of Evil. The Incarnate One has been down to this earth, and to Hades; has seen war in these regions as no other being has seen it; and so has come to know in a manner and measure of his own what sin is, and what the contrary of sin is. In heaven all are perfect, but the perfection is of a lower or higher order, as the capacities for goodness partake of a lower or higher

development. A large experience of good no doubt secures a higher tone of goodness. But the experience of a contact with evil as well as good must be experience supplying lessons of its own. The agony of the wrestler gives pliancy and power to the limbs so exercised. So, to wrestle with the powers of darkness and to prevail, is to become something more than is needful to give existence to a child of light. We know a little of this, but nothing compared with what Christ must have known.

Let it be remembered, then, that to have fellowship with Christ in these experiences, will be, in our measure, to become great with his greatness. We are all to suffer in this respect like him, that we may rise to a future like his. It is the mind that is in Christ, not the mind that was in Adam, that is to be ours. So man, humbled by sin, is humbled that he may be exalted. His future will be a greater future by his passing through this sinful earth to heaven, than it would have been had he ascended from one pure paradise to another. His moral education in this world will have made him to know good and evil as he could not otherwise have known them, and will have nurtured strength in him in a special degree, for cleaving to the one and resisting the other. The mysteries of good and evil are the grand mysteries of the celestial world, and here are new and precious materials for studies of that nature, of which those who desire to look into such things will not be slow to avail themselves.

But when I speak of the Incarnation as showing to us what human nature may be and will be, I am far from meaning to say that there would be power in the Incarnation alone to raise men to this state. In relation to

that object even this great manifestation would be found wanting apart from the Atonement; and the Incarnation and the Atonement taken together, would fail of their end, if not allied with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Under that influence all the natural fitnesses of the Manger and the Cross to touch the human soul and to bring it to God, become strong for their purpose, and revelations to us of 'the wisdom of God and of the power 'of God.'

The schoolmen of the middle age, who exercised their faculty for speculation almost without limit on all topics, originated many questions more curious than profitable on this subject. Some of them were disposed to regard the Incarnation as an event that would have come to pass even if sin had not secured any lodgment in human nature. The Divine, it was said, in so far as it is possible to human nature, must come to that nature if the Divine idea concerning the order of things of which man is the head, is to be realised, and this cannot be imagined as likely to have come without the great manifestation of the Godhead through Christ. Humanity as seen in him is assumed as the ultimate form of the spiritual to be secured by the creation of the world and of man. Man has sinned, and in consequence the Incarnation is now an Incarnation to redeem him. But he might not have sinned, and then the design of the Incarnation would have been to raise him into a higher participation in the Divine life than would otherwise have been possible to him.

But this is not reasoning. It is a play of fancy—a dream. The Incarnation is a doctrine of Scripture. We know nothing concerning it except from that source;

and by that authority only can it be judged. So regarded, two things are certain in reference to it. First, it is certain that the great design of the Incarnation as known to us is to redeem us—Christ is 'the Lamb of 'God that taketh away the sin of the world.' 'As Moses 'lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son 'of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him 'should not perish but have everlasting life.' Second, it is no less certain, that the Scriptures give no sanction to the notion that God might have been manifest in the flesh even though man had not become an offender. It is quite true that humanity in Christ is the exemplar to which redeemed men are to be assimilated, and that the whole system of things as between humanity and God, was, according to his eternal purpose, to have this issue. But to know that the Incarnation was to achieve this object by redeeming us, is to know that it could not have been present to the Divine mind in any other relation. We know that it was to take place for this end, we have no means of knowing that it might have taken place for any other. We have not to do with a possible universe or with a possible God. We have to do with the universe as it is, and with God as he is. Our modern schoolmen, the Germans, have speculated on this theme very much after the manner of their predecessors centuries since, and with as little warrant, and with the same profitless results.

But we were speaking of our fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. In one respect we fail lamentably in this matter. However tried and tempted, Christ was without sin. We never resist with a purity like his, and are often ensnared and vanquished. How often have

we parleyed with the enemy when we should have resolutely refused all speech with him; and how often have we believed his lie, and become his victims? How do the circumstances of time and place connected with such disastrous events in our spiritual history haunt us, and filling us with mingled shame and alarm, render many a day dark, which, in the absence of such memories of infirmity, would have been light and blessed? Memory is the registrar of our past years, and can be evoked by conscience at any moment, and made to present her long roll of follies, and of things to which a harder name must be given. The Davids and Peters of religious history know what this means: and so do multitudes who have not sinned exactly after their manner.

But may we not imagine how good will possibly be found in things thus evil? The mercy that subdues such offenders into penitence, and the grace that can cause the memory of former sins to awaken caution and humbleness for the future, can ensure that the eternity of such natures shall be pervaded by a deeper wonder, love, and gratitude as the result of having such a past to look back upon. They have tried the Divine longsuffering to the uttermost, can they sufficiently adore it? They have had much forgiven, must they not love much? What a lowliness and tenderness of soul may we not suppose will be sent through all that future by the fixedness—the awful changelessness of those dark spots in a bygone earthly life! Angels may shrink with the sensitiveness proper to their pure nature from the touch of sin. How much more they who can remember what it is to be stung by it—who have so fallen under its seductive power as to have been all but lost? Can we not

believe that there are notes heard in the songs of the redeemed in heaven, such as come not from those who have no such seasons of discomfiture and unworthiness to remember? God forgives us, is it too much to say that saved sinners never forgive themselves? It is this remembrance of sin, inseparable from lives like ours, which renders the Incarnation, beautiful as it is, painfully inadequate to our case. I look on Christ's image and feel that if that image in me is left to be self-evolved it will never come. It must be a new creation, such as only a Divine hand can realise.

SECTION VI.

THE ATONEMENT.

THE visible universe is pervaded by law. The causes rooted in material things are rooted there according to law. The order of this physical world comes from the conformity of its elements to the laws to which it was designed they should be subject. The grandeur of nature is from this source —her beauty, her lustre, her fruitfulness, the sublime consummation of things presented in her history from age to age. In these influences we may see the thrones, dominions, and powers which exist but to do His bidding who has created them—the hierarchy of potentates who divide all space between them, and guard and regulate all natural things, great and small. Hence the fixedness of everything about us — the stars and planets, the land and deep, winter and summer, day and night. Like their Creator, these influences neither sleep nor slumber, are neither faint nor weary. Our thought can travel through space with a celerity which makes even the lightning a loiterer, and when we try to realise the vast domain pervaded by this sovereignty of law—of

law affecting the hairs of our head and the chariot sweep of systems in the heavens—we feel that the majesty of law is a majesty surpassed only by that of the Law-maker. His image assuredly it is, his utterance, the sign of this ever present Infinitude!

But if there be a sublimity in the laws which pervade material things, must there not be a sublimity of a much higher order in the laws which pervade the spiritual universe? Mind transcends matter immeasurably. The two have but one thing in common—they are alike subject to law. But matter is unconscious, and is obedient to force. Mind is conscious, and is obedient to motives. Material laws, even the most powerful, are adjusted to their object with great precision; but in the action of moral law there is a special refinement, subtlety, and mystery, and the effects of violating such law are specially disastrous. The disturbance of law in the physical universe brings physical disorder, and there it ends. Antagonism to moral law brings, not only disorder, but suffering. In the latter case the disturbance has been conscious and voluntary, and the fruit of it becomes bitterness to the free and conscious nature of the offender. Hence if we see the majesty of God in the laws which give order to material things, how much more is before us in the laws which give order and happiness to the spiritual universe. If we bow down before him as we see him wheel the planets in their course, or sprinkle his gold dust on the insect's wing, how much lower should we bend as we see him impart the light and life which brings out his own image in his creatures, and as we see him diffuse the harmonies of the God-like in such natures into all the relations of being

thus hallowed to himself? Material things give us his lower glory. Spiritual things give us 'the glory that 'excelleth.'

If therefore it must behove the Divine Being to uphold his natural laws, that there may be natural order in his works; how much more must it behove him to uphold moral law, that there may be moral order in the much higher department of his rule—the department where the ruled natures are possessed of spiritual intelligence, and are governed by spiritual motives to spiritual ends? We may suppose many of the present laws of matter to be annulled, and the Divine Nature to be the same; but we cannot suppose a single moral law to be rescinded, inasmuch as the distinctions of right and wrong are immutable, and in that case the Deity himself would say and unsay concerning those distinctions. If to realise his own image in his creatures be his highest end in Creation, then we may be sure that the great care of his rule will be to uphold moral law, and that heaven and earth will pass away sooner than one jot or tittle in law of that order will be allowed to fail.

Moral law is based on the principle of right, and as such must be eternal. Duty in creatures arises out of capacities and relations. What it is the duty of a creature to be or to do, as possessed of certain capacities, and as existing in certain relations, must be his duty for ever, supposing those capacities to continue, and those relations to remain the same. It is thus that right comes to be unchangeable and everlasting.

We can imagine ourselves as standing related to a Holy Being, a Being characterised by high rectitude and truthfulness. Then we ought to reverence that Being,

on account of that rectitude and truthfulness, supposing we have a capacity to understand what those qualities mean, and a capacity to feel reverentially towards them.

We stand related also to a Good Being—a Being who wills nothing but happiness to other being. Need it be said that we ought to love that Being on account of his goodness, supposing we have a capacity to understand what goodness is, and a capacity to feel affectionately towards it.

We can further suppose this holy and good Being to have put forth these qualities of his nature for our welfare, guarding us against many evils, conferring upon us much good—then does it not follow that we should be grateful to him, supposing we have a capacity to understand what obligation is, and hearts capable of the feeling which the word gratitude is intended to denote?

Once more—let it be supposed that the Being to whom we stand related is not only in a high degree just, true, and good, but infinitely just, infinitely true, and infinitely good, and that his perfections have been exercised to befriend us on a scale that we cannot hope to comprehend. Can anything be more clear than that we ought to reverence, and love, and trust this Being with all our mind and heart?

It scarcely need be said that this is the character, and that these are the relations, under which God is known to us; and that such are the capacities of apprehension and feeling inseparable from our nature. We *can* understand these relations, and we *can* see the duty inseparable from them. And so long as the Divine Nature and relations shall be what they are, and so long as the natural capacities of men shall be what they are, so long

the law which requires supreme love to the Creator, and an equal love to all creatures, must be binding upon us.

It is true we have now to do with human nature as under sin. It has the natural capacity to become all that the law of the just and good can demand, but it has lost the moral disposition necessary to that end. In this want of dutiful inclination, however, we see a defect, a deformity, a defilement, on which the Divine Being cannot possibly look with complacency. If there is to be concord between God and man, it can never come by the abrogation of law, as that would leave the antagonism between our sinfulness and his sinlessness as a perpetual gulph of separation. What separates between man and God is not distance of place, but opposition of nature. It is admitted, of course, that this want of disposition is in great part inherited, and is a defect in our nature which makes it certain that we shall all become sinners. Of this something will be said elsewhere. At present, the point I wish to make clear is, that to secure creature well-being by sinking the authority of law is simply an impossibility. All that is essential to the Divine Nature is opposed to it. What is wanting for man, is not deliverance from some external hell into which he may be driven, but deliverance from the hell that will be perpetuated within him so long as his moral nature shall be in antagonism with justice and goodness.

The Divine *rectitude* ensures the perpetuity of the Divine law. It is based on right, and, come what may, the judge of all the earth will do right. If his intelligent creatures are ever to be fully approved in his sight, they must be conformed to the same rule. To love Him supremely, is simply to yield to him his due. To love

our fellow-creatures as ourselves, is to be no more than it is our duty to be. In thus being, we give unto God the things that are God's, and to his creatures the things that are theirs—nothing more. To be wanting in this service is to rob God and to defraud his creatures. All sin is so much wrong done directly to God, or to the creatures of God; and of his own rights, and of the rights of his creatures, the Supreme is himself the guardian. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord.' We know what befalls those who will not have him to reign over them. To him the wronged of all lands look up against the wrong-doer, and it will be found at last that they have not looked to him in vain. The work of man will he render unto him, and iniquity will be far from him. To suppose the contrary would be to degrade him into the patron of wrong, in place of adoring him as the great pattern of all right.

Nor is it more certain that the Divine *rectitude* must demand that the Divine law shall be maintained, than that the Divine *benevolence* must so do. Sin is not only so much wrong in the place of right, but, as indicated, it is so much misery in the place of happiness. We everywhere see the lusts of the flesh bring suffering into the flesh, and the lusts of the mind bring suffering into the mind. Gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness never fail to bring their retributions along with them; and so of evil passions in the soul—covetousness, envy, malice, revenge. What desolation and horror do these emotions often send through the souls of men! We see this relation of things in part, but only in part. Sin is a subtle malady, and insinuates itself through our nature in ways past finding out. We shall not know all

that it has done upon our nature until we are free from it. It has made this world a vale of tears. It has done worse in the next. The Good Being, who wills nothing but happiness to other beings, seeing in sin the great and sole antagonist to such happiness, must hate it with an infinite hatred—and that means that he must uphold his law, which is the antagonist of sin, from the promptings of an infinite attachment. He could as soon cease to be as cease to do so. I can imagine all the material things he has called into existence to pass away; all spiritual natures except his own to exist no longer; and that he should dwell alone, as he must have done in the eternity of the past, but even then this law of which we speak would be *in* his nature, and would *govern* it. He would still be, though alone, the Holy, the Just, and Good. It is his glory that it should be so. And it is his will that the glory of his creatures should be like his own—a reflection from it, his own image, the happiness of creatures coming from the holiness of creatures.

But this necessary perpetuity of law brings with it alarming consequences to those who are conscious of having been through life offenders against it. 'Whatsoever things the law saith it saith to those who are 'under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all 'the world become guilty before God.'* Thus the universality of guilt is unquestionable, the only question left concerns the degree in which we may be thus chargeable. In the first section of this enquiry some attempt has been made to determine that point. That we have all left undone much that we should have done, and done much that we ought not to have done, is our

* Rom. iii. 19.

common confession. Whatever the taint of depravity may be which we inherit, our actual delinquencies, for which we have ourselves simply to blame, are many and grievous. This defect and fault in our lives, moreover, has come from defect and fault in our inner nature, and for this condition of our inner nature we are assured by him who knows it well, we are ourselves largely responsible. Thus much is true concerning the small number who from temperament, or the influence of circumstances, may be accounted the least depraved. How much more is true of the majority of human beings; and how much more still of such as become marked offenders. If we accept the best men the world has known as our authorities on this subject, even the least delinquent among us have only too much reason to take their place in low self-abasement before the Infinite. 'I have heard of thee 'before by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye 'seeth thee, wherefore I repent and abhor myself in dust 'and ashes.'*

Yes—the best men see the most clearly their need of mercy, and most of the difficulty in the way of its exercise in their favour. They know the law of which all sin is the transgression to be good, and that being good the Infinitely Good can never abandon it. Right must not be surrendered in the pardon of wrong. God must not be implored to deny himself—to dishonour himself, in forgiving sin. He must be just, whatever be the doom of the unjust. Here is the grand difficulty to the human conscience. How may right be saved and sinners be saved? How may God be God and sin be forgiven? How may the All-just be just and the

* Job xlii. 5, 6.

unjust not be lost? Our moral nature assures us that God must be all this—righteous, holy, or he will be no God: and if he must be all this, where is the ground of hope for man? The dread alternative seems to be, either that the character of God is gone, or that the hope of man must perish. Can no mark be put upon sin which shall brand it in the sight of the Universe so that after that there may be forgiveness? Can no such voluntary and special homage be rendered to law as may avail to open a way of pardon to those who have violated law? If in Adam all have died, may there not be another through whom all may be made alive? If by one man's disobedience many have been made sinners, may there not be another through whose obedience many may be made righteous? If by one man's offence judgment has come upon all men to condemnation, may there not be another through whose sinless work the free gift may come upon all men unto the justification of life? * As our sins pass before us, like ghosts of the departed, in long procession, we ask in dismay — from the depth of our agony, can no cheering answer be given to these questions?

Yes—cheering answers may be given to them—have been given to them. The Incarnation and the Cross give us the responding voice from heaven. Jesus is 'the 'Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world' † Through his 'propitiation' for sin, God *declares his righteousness* in the remission of sins that are past. ‡ By this means, God can be '*faithful* and *just* in for-'giving men their sins, and in cleansing them from all

* Rom. v. 15-21. † John i. 29. ‡ Rom. iii. 25, 26.

'unrighteousness.'* Christ is 'the end of the law for 'righteousness to every one that believeth.'† What is the effect of all this on the authority of law? Let the apostle answer that question. 'Do we then make void the law 'through faith? God forbid, yea we establish the law.'‡ The language now cited affirms the fact of the case. It is so, that in this way God is righteous in pardoning unrighteousness—just in justifying the ungodly. But *how* is this accomplished? May we hope to comprehend it? Not altogether. But in great part we may, and whatever we may know should be sought out and husbanded by us as the most precious of all knowledge.

In looking to the Atonement for sin made by Christ, we must remember carefully that what it is in relation to God is one thing, and what it is in relation to man is another, but that both relations are essential to the accomplishment of its great purpose. It must be what is required by God, that it may be what is needed by man. Some men fix their attention exclusively on one of these aspects, and some on the other, and the errors, both speculative and practical, which flow from this one-sidedness are of the gravest description. By putting asunder what God has thus joined together, many have become graceless Antinomians, while others have dropped into a hazy Sentimentalism. The doctrine of the Atonement is destined to subdue, refine, and ennoble every soul embracing it; but before we are at liberty to look to it as possessing this power, it behoves us, if our religion is not to be more selfish than pious, to see clearly how it meets the demands of law, and guards the

* 1 John i. 9. † Rom. x. 4. ‡ Rom. iii. 31.

Divine rectitude and purity in the exercise of mercy and grace.

We have seen something of the essential relations of law, and of the judicial administration of law, to the moral universe. Sin is an insurgent force directed against this reign of 'justice and judgment'—that is, against this righteousness which is the law of the Divine nature, and against the rectitude which characterises the administration of that law. Supposing sin to exist, and some scheme to come into action which is designed to check and destroy it, what can be more certain than that this scheme will aim to repair the breach that sin has made in the Divine law, and to efface the dishonour it has cast on the Divine authority? The act of sin is a deed the direction of which is eminently Godward—'against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and 'done this evil in thy sight.'* And are we not in consequence obliged to suppose that the great act of removing sin will be an act seen to have a bearing eminently Godward? The first threatening was—the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die. That threatening is disregarded, and the retributive laws which in consequence came into action all carry the seeds of death along with them. Here, assuredly, the judicial is palpable enough. The doom of the sinner comes from it. This judicial act, moreover, affects not the first man merely, but the whole race. 'In Adam all die.' Now if men are to be recovered from this condition, why should it be thought incredible that the scheme of their restoration should be of a nature to render special homage to law, and to authority in the administration of law?

* Psalms li. 4.

It may be said, and is said, that Christ honours the law by obeying it; by allowing the retributive penalties to come upon offenders as we see in this world; by proclaiming its immutable authority; by declaring that its denunciations in relation to a future world shall be inflicted; and, above all, by exercising the moral power of his own nature over human spirits so as gradually to bring them back into a complete and everlasting conformity to law. This, it is said, is enough. Now all this is true, grandly true, but it is not the whole truth. In some of the concessions here made, however, the further truth which the persons who so express themselves are concerned to deny is unconsciously admitted. Christ, we are told, re-enacts the Divine law perfectly in this life. Nevertheless, he is exposed to the full force of the retributive laws called forth by sin, and designed only to fall upon sinners. The innocent suffers for the guilty. The just suffers and dies as the unjust only deserve to suffer and to die. Who has required this at his hands? It takes place within the government of the Most High. It is accepted by the Supreme Ruler as a sufficient ground, or as a fitting medium, of salvation to men.

Now men may refuse to call this expiation, propitiation, or atonement, but there is no getting away from the fact that the truth which those terms are commonly used to denote is there. It is what Christ becomes in relation to law, both in obedience and suffering, that has given us this way of return to God. The Divine Being releases one guilty man from suffering, because another, and an innocent man, has suffered in his stead. He accepts, moreover, the imperfect obedience of one man, for the sake of the perfect obedience of another. The sinlessness

and the sufferings of Christ become the only way known among men whereby we can be saved. God forgives sin through this medium, and through no other; accepts us through this medium, and through no other; and sanctifies us through this medium, and through no other. He does this for a reason, or without a reason. If for a reason, what is that reason? He has himself answered that question. It has 'pleased' him that Christ should be what he is as a re-enactment of law; and it has been his will to place in his hands the cup of suffering—suffering for others, which he was to drink. To affirm in the face of such facts, that there was nothing judicial, nothing legal, nothing really Godward in the work of Christ, must be, as it seems to me, to betray a perverseness from which almost anything may be expected. In fact, if men believe themselves to be saved by the merits of Christ at all, no matter how, their scheme of salvation must be open to all the scornful taunts which some men are disposed to cast against the great Protestant doctrine on this subject. There is no escape from them, except by rejecting the vicarious altogether, and reducing the Gospel to the level of a simple Deism.

We assent most cordially to all that may be said concerning the beauty and greatness seen in the character of Christ, or concerning its fitness to awaken admiration, and a desire of imitation. All this may be true—beautifully true, while the effect of such discoursing may be despair rather than hope. For sin never becomes so evil as when seen in comparison with His sinlessness. The distance between what he is, and what we are, never becomes so great, so depressing, as when we feel ourselves in his presence. How may I be forgiven—

how may I become like him, are the distressing questions which come up with special force when thought is so directed, and the Incarnation taken alone does not answer these questions, was not designed to answer them. It is with the first of these exigencies that we are to be concerned in this section of our enquiry. Whence is *pardon*?

We all admit that Christ became powerful to save men by suffering. We live through his death, and the fruit of his great work comes from 'the travail of 'his soul.' But the body may sink under pain, and the spirit may break down under sorrow, and no virtue be found to yield benefit to the sufferer or to any one else, in what is endured. Paul could imagine a man to give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and all be worthless from the absence of the motive which could alone give value to such actions.

It cannot be too steadily borne in mind, that the suffering of Christ, if we except the darkness which came over his spirit for a brief space upon the cross, appears to have been altogether such as may be said to have been inseparable from such a nature, coming on such an errand, into a world like ours. He came that he might in his person re-enact the law which all men had broken and abandoned, that he might embody the purity of heaven upon earth, and that he might deliver the Divine message specially needed by an ungodly world. What antagonisms are here! Conflict accordingly was inevitable, such a conflict as the world had never seen. Suffering too was inevitable, such suffering as humanity had never passed through before. To acquit himself faithfully towards such a world of sinning natures as

was around him, was to suffer as confessor or martyr had never suffered; and to bear in his spiritual experiences, all that he may be supposed to realise in relation to evil and good, so that men might be saved from the one, and restored to the other, through his merit, was to pass through a mental history, which, from the nature of the case, must have warranted the lament—'never 'were sorrows like unto my sorrow.' This is the cup which the Father gave, and what it included was known to him who gave it and to him who drank it, but can be fully known to no lower intelligence.

The physical suffering of the Redeemer was a part of the price to be paid for our redemption. It was deemed well that his appearance among us should not be with observation, but noiseless, obscure, and humble. The great need of the world at this time was not that a teacher should come preaching contempt of the poor, submission to the powerful, homage to the learned, admiration of the gifted. The world was full enough of that. It had already become sadly unbalanced in that direction. The need was of an instructor who should know how to persuade the rich to be mindful of the poor, the powerful to befriend the powerless, the learned to descend to the ignorant, and the most gifted to show sympathy with the least gifted. The idolatry of social and intellectual distinctions had gone quite far enough, it was time that the world should be made to see that moral and spiritual distinctions stand far higher in the estimation of the Being whom Jesus has taught us to address as our common Father. His ways are not adjusted to flatter the preconceptions and tastes of 'the wise and prudent' in this world, they are of a sort rather to

commend themselves readily to the guileless and simple-minded—the 'babes' of the race. There are haughty men who must have truth come to them in their own way, or they see it not—it is 'hid' from them if not so presented. There are also humble souls, on whom a touch of nature never comes in vain—and these last, the despised commonly of this world, are the truly great in the sight of heaven. Let us not be offended then by the lowly state in which we find Incarnate Greatness. There was wisdom and goodness in this mystery. Our Lord's grand lesson to humanity is a lesson of self-sacrifice, and from what condition could he preach it with more fitness, and more prospect of success, than from the condition thus chosen by him? To command may be good, but the grand thing in the teacher, as in the captain, is to lead the way. That the mission of Christ might be felt as a mission to man as man, it pleased him who was rich to become poor. His errand, indeed, was one of pity to the potentates of the earth, if the princes of this world had been only wise enough so to regard it. It was, however, eminently the errand of one who came 'to remember the forgotten and to visit the forsaken.' But to manifest the Divine condescension and love in this form was inseparable from much of the kind of suffering seen in the earthly history of the Saviour. To grace poverty as he did by descending into it, was of course to know what is meant by the ills of poverty.

Over the early years of our Lord a veil rests which no man can raise, and which none but a very reverent hand should attempt to raise, even if it were possible. We have no reason to suppose that the home of the Saviour differed materially from the well-ordered homes

of the pious and humbler families of Galilee in that day. The spirit leavening human society has too commonly been a selfish and haughty spirit, disposing class to look down upon class, and especially upon the lowest, or on those at all near it. If poverty is never described as a sin, it has been too generally dealt with as if it were. To be poor has been to be despised, and the incidents are frequent which show that the humble origin of Jesus was a stumbling-block to many. But so it was to be. His birth in the manger was designed to be significant of much that was to follow—of a life that was fittingly described by his memorable words, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have 'nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' We learn that during his early and private life, those who knew him as neighbours, were not allowed to see the glory that was in him. It was not expedient that they should. As he grew up he grew in favour among them, that is all we know. But when he entered on his public work, the reason for such concealment had passed away; and those who had known him before, are described as looking with astonishment at each other as they listen to him, and as saying, 'Is not this the carpenter's son, is 'not his mother called Mary, and are not his brethren and 'sisters with us; whence hath this man this wisdom?— 'and they were offended in him.'* Over a wide surface, his humble origin would be enough to ensure his being '*despised* and rejected of men.' So pressed are the disciples of this poor master, that to abate their hunger they pluck the ears of corn in the field through which they pass: and while Jesus talks with the woman at the

* Matt. xiii. 53–57.

well, weary and faint, begging a gift of water to allay his thirst, his disciples are gone to buy food, that, homeless ones as they were, they might take their humble meal together in the open air. Refined and sensitive spirits, placing themselves in such circumstances, can imagine in part the kind of suffering which came upon the man of sorrows from this source.

But the offence taken at the poverty of the teacher was small, compared with that which resulted from the nature of his teaching. It was the truth which he became incarnate to deliver that specially raised the antagonism of his enemies. It became him, as we have seen, to draw down the mask from before the features of the scribe, the priest, and the pharisee—to oppose truth to their error, sincerity to their hypocrisy. But to do that was to fill the souls of such men with the bitterest hatred. Well might he say—'I am not come to 'send peace on the earth, but a sword.' Among the most deadly haters in this world are the men who have been foiled in their attempts to use religion as a means of gratifying their selfish passions. The reason is obvious —your success against such men must be the destruction of their most cherished pleasure, and they learn to hate you accordingly. Hence, that the Great Truth-teller should be apprehended as you apprehend a thief; that the lash should be made to plough up his sacred flesh; that the thorns should be made to enter his hallowed brow; that the nails should be made to pass, stroke after stroke, through those tender hands, and feet, and that the burning fever should become hotter, and the choking thirst more unendurable, until the last struggle passes away, the last sigh is heard, and all is over—all this,

terrible as it is, is no more than might have been expected in the history of one coming on such a service into such a region. Human passion did all this. The Divine hand was in it only in so far as to have permitted so much goodness to be exposed to the action of so much wickedness. Enraged men could destroy the body, and that they were sure to do. Jesus foresaw all this, foretold it all, and was prepared to pass through it all, that the voice of truth, like a voice from heaven, might be heard in a world in which it had been so long outraged and downtrodden. 'I am the Light of the World, he 'that followeth me shall have the light of life.'

It was, then, the spiritual end to be served by bearing so much physical suffering which gave to that suffering its meaning and value. So also the spiritual suffering, 'the travail of soul,' which is truly the great offering that takes away sin, was not mere suffering, but such as came naturally from the character of the work which the sufferer had undertaken to accomplish.

We can see, for instance, how all the spiritual susceptibilities of the Redeemer's nature must have been wounded by *the conduct of men towards him.* Jesus came, the sinless into the midst of a world of sinners, and what that must have included we can know only in part. We know something of the revulsion of feeling with which persons of refinement and taste avoid anything like companionship with persons of coarse and low propensities. We know also something of the feeling that separates minds which see a majesty in rectitude, a sacredness in truth, and a beauty in goodness, from persons who are unprincipled, flagitious, shameless. To such minds there is hardly a feature in the condition

of the lost more revolting, than is presented in the thought of being shut up for ever in some future world with natures which stained this world so deeply by their sins before they were sent thither. Much of that nature must have been the experience of the pure mind of Christ while sojourning with us.

Among the sufferings of Christ of which direct mention is made in Scripture, is that which came from his having to bear 'the contradiction of sinners against 'himself.' This antagonism, moreover, in his sight, was not restricted to utterances and acts. He knew what was in man. He could not only see the scowl on the brow; he could not only read the hate and treachery which are sometimes written on the very features of men; he could look into their hearts, and could see all the seething passions there with their scorpion stings directed against him. The atmosphere around him was charged with such elements from day to day. All this happened in the experience of one who could contrast with a world thus charged with evil, the world from which he had come and in which no taint of evil was to be found. The hypocrisy of the pharisee, the enmity of the priest, the sordidness of the worldling, the pride of the magistrate, the cruelty of the mob—all were unmasked to his vision. If the soul of righteous Lot was vexed continually by the depravity he knew to be prevalent about him, what must a nature much purer than his have felt who saw depraved hearts about him of which he could say that it would be more tolerable at last for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah than for them? If the Psalmist could say 'Rivers of water 'run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law;'

what must David's Lord have felt on looking upon a world like the present, who saw in holiness and sin, and in heaven and hell, more than prophet had ever seen, and felt in relation to them, more than prophet had ever felt? The instances are few on which we are allowed to have a glimpse of what passed in this form through the soul of the Saviour. Once he exclaims, even when speaking of his disciples, 'Oh faithless 'generation, how long shall I be with you, how long 'shall I suffer you!' And we all remember his lament over the guilty city. 'Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how 'often would I have gathered thy children together as 'a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye 'would not!'

But important as it was that the truth of God should be thus published in a world which had been so much estranged from it by the Devil's lie, and that all that was needful to be borne by the Redeemer to that end should be borne, this was by no means all that was required to make atonement for sin. Sin, the fruit of falsehood, must be faced and vanquished. Humanity, which has fallen by sin, must meet it in a new representative conflict, and must prevail.

Hence to the suffering of Christ from the conduct of men, we must add his suffering under the *temptations* which the Powers of Darkness were allowed to bring into his path. Homage must be done to the just and good, which shall outweigh the dishonour done to them, and the nature from which the dishonour has come, is the nature from which the homage; in a far higher degree, must come. That the seductive influences of evil are not left to their purely natural action in the world

is the teaching of Scripture both in the Old Testament and the New. Evil spirits influence human spirits. The narrative concerning the Temptation in the Wilderness is conclusive on that point. The Tempter who had succeeded in Paradise was to be foiled in the Desert. Temptations in endless forms must have been met by our Lord in every stage of his earthly course. The constant pressure of evil upon him must have been the constant pressure of influences of that nature. Evil has its plausibilities and fascinations, and would generate itself wherever it is possible, destroying the good. What strength may be added to the natural force of evil by the suggestions and sophistries of dark spiritual influences invisible to us we do not know; but that the seductive power of sin may be augmented greatly by such agencies we may learn in part from experience, and still more from Scripture testimony. Satan had marred this lower creation. He is now to find in it a power on the side of goodness which is to baffle all his devices, and to make the region of his victory the place of his irretrievable discomfiture.

Our record in regard to the Temptation in the Wilderness is very brief. But the few sentences which have come to us on the subject are sufficient to indicate the character of the struggle. It should be remembered that the Temptation belongs to the commencement of our Lord's ministry. At his baptism John had been inspired to proclaim him as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The voice from heaven lends its confirmation to this announcement. Jesus now finds himself possessed of supernatural powers. His life hitherto had probably been in a large degree a mystery to himself, as it was to others. But now more light has come

upon his way. He *is* the promised Messiah. He is specially gifted that he might be equal to that great office. It is while full of these thoughts that he directs his steps towards the Wilderness. There his mind goes out on what is before him, and his spiritual trial—his Temptation comes. The scene which follows is one that vulgar fiction could never have devised. Such hands could not have touched it without running riot upon it. Viewed in relation to what had just happened, it has a refined appropriateness that can only be explained by accepting its reality. The Enemy hopes to find Jesus so possessed with ideas concerning his high office and his supernatural gifts as to be liable to be seduced into a rash exercise of his newly ascertained power, and into a hasty and ambitious pursuit of the wide rule and authority said to be before him. Hence the words—'Why hunger 'in the desert while thou hast power to convert stones 'into bread? Why fear to cast thyself from the turret 'of the temple seeing no harm can possibly befall thee? 'Why so slow in seeking dominion, while by putting 'forth thy might under my direction that end may be 'speedily accomplished?' So the siege was prosecuted, we have reason to believe, until every artifice in its turn was exhausted. Forty days and forty nights! The answer given again and again is—it is written, it is written. The issue of that conflict was the settlement of the future. Christ is to work wonders, but for *others*, not for himself. Peter and Paul could heal the sick and punish the impious, by supernatural means, but Peter could not release himself from prison, nor could Paul secure himself against stripes and shipwreck. This wise law of restriction which we think must often have

been a mystery to the servants, began with their Lord. He is to be a king, but his kingdom is not to be of this world. Nothing can seduce him, nothing can estrange him from his high spiritual purpose.

It will not be supposed, however, that temptation is a light matter even in the case of those who resist it effectually. We know it is not. We can perhaps remember seasons when some impure image, some foul thought, or some blasphemous utterance would haunt us, and be sure to be the most present with us when we wish to be free from it the most. Our better nature has loathed, execrated the defilement which has thus forced itself upon us. The moments have been perhaps in which we would have met the enemy face to face, or have passed through almost any torture to have become free from such assaults. So as to temptations of other kinds. In all there is suffering—a parting it may be as with the right hand or the right eye. But in the involuntary forms of temptation there is often a nameless sense of anguish. If it be so however with us, what must it have been with him, whose perceptions in relation to spiritual things were so much beyond ours, and whose sensibilities in relation to such things were of the exquisite temperament belonging to perfect natures. Nevertheless, it is written, that he 'was tried and tempted 'in all points as we are:' so that influences of this nature which are distributed among us, here a little, and there a little, as we are able to bear it, would seem to have come in full confluence upon him. On him, who, in a sense, would feel the least, as we should not feel the greatest.

As we have seen, the first man fell in Paradise under

the first temptation; the second Adam remains pure in a world charged with sin, and in the face of all the temptation that evil, whether earthly or Satanic, can bring against him. The suffering inseparable from all this who shall describe—who shall imagine? The hinge of the future, for this world, and for worlds invisible, may be said to have turned on that grand trial scene in the Wilderness. The ascendant power in the universe is to be good or evil according to that issue. Such being its destined influence we cannot suppose the issue itself to have been really uncertain. Humanity in Christ has passed through its great ordeal, and has come forth unscathed, unspotted. Our nature in Christ *could* be all this—*is* all this. In the sight of such a fact, should it not be felt to be a grand thing to be a man? What the true body and reasonable soul were in Christ, that all shall become who are redeemed by him. He is the 'first-born,' the later born are born after his image. He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

But deeper laid in the history of the sufferings of our Lord than his physical pain, or than his mental anguish from the conduct of men, or the force of temptation, was that 'sorrow unto death' which came upon him from his placing himself in his relation to sin in our stead—to sin viewed in all its malignant action in regard both to God and man.

Christ is known to us in a filial relation. He is the Son of God. He has come from the Father. He is the model of filial affection. The law of the Infinite, in his view, is holy, just, and good. It claims no more for the Divine lawgiver than is his due; no more for the Supreme Father than is his due. All want of confor-

mity to this rule is sin—a withholding of right from God. All direct trespass against it differs from such sin only as being more positive in its form. In this manner the Divine Being is defrauded and wronged by sin. The Creator commands, the creature practically says—I will not obey. He forbids, and the creature practically says—I will do what thou hast forbidden. He reveals an Infinite Majesty, and the rebel nature puts scorn upon it: an Infinite Goodness, and the rebel heart still revolts against him. That nature has taken sides with one who has been a liar and a destroyer from the beginning. It hearkens to his voice, and follows in his ways, in place of listening to a higher voice, and pursuing a better course. And it is a world—a whole race of beings that have so done. All, in a greater degree or a less have been thus seduced, and have acquitted themselves thus dishonourably and defiantly in relation to the Being on whom they depend for life, and breath, and all things.

Such is sin as seen in relation to God. Sin in relation to man, was in the view of the Redeemer so much creature deformity in the place of creature beauty; so much creature defilement in the place of creature purity; and so much creature misery in the place of creature happiness. It was in his sight as the coming of some pestilential breath over a fair creation, effacing its loveliness, drying up its life, and frustrating the purpose of its Creator in calling it into existence. It had severed the intelligence of man from God, that intelligence that should have been rich in its knowledge of the Divine Nature and of all things Divine. It had severed the heart of man from God, that heart which should have

been full of divine affections, and should have realised a divine blessedness from their presence. In place of this, the thorn and the briar have come into the outward lot of man. Labour and sorrow track him in all his ways, and in the end bring him down to the dust of the grave. The lusts of the flesh send disorder and suffering into his flesh, the lusts of the mind do the same in that region. Man, having become the perpetrator of wrong against God, naturally becomes a wrong-doer, on a fearful scale, in his relations with men. Such is the picture of the present, and the foreboding it carries with it for the future is a still graver aspect of the case.

All this—this work of sin in relation to God and man, was present to the mind of the Son of God to an extent which we cannot hope to comprehend, and carrying with it a depth of meaning we cannot hope to penetrate. To him, truly, the gold had become changed, the fine gold had become dim. Who shall say what was included in looking at all this, so as not only to apprehend it as it really is, but to feel in regard to it as humanity should feel? Our Lord, indeed, could not know anything of the sorrows of penitence. In himself there was nothing of which he could repent. But there was room enough for sorrow in looking upon the nature he had assumed as thus conditioned—in looking on this mighty world of evils, as it cast up its dishonours against God, and as it brought all this dissoluteness and misery into the homes and hearts of the offenders. To deplore this as we ought to deplore it; to weep over it as we ought to weep over it; to become broken-hearted in the contemplation of it, as we should all become—this was the part of the passion of Christ which caused him to pray,

once and again — 'Father if it be possible—if it be 'possible, let this cup pass from me!' Was it the fear of a mere martyr death which induced that cry? Can it be rational—can it be less than impiety to think so? Gethsemane bore witness to the agony which came from this mysterious—marvellous element in the great sacrifice.

Who does not see the fitness of this homage rendered to the good, by one who shares in the same nature with those who had bowed down so shamefully to the evil? Who does not see that the next best thing to our becoming all this ourselves in relation to God and the God-like, must be that we should learn to see the beauty—the transcendent beauty of *his* becoming all this in our stead? And who does not see that the one thing further needed by us, in order to the complete restoration of all things affecting the future of humanity is, that grace should descend upon us enabling us to realise this all-beautiful mind of Christ as our own? The first thing done here has been, to vindicate law, and to give satisfaction to the honour of God; and through what is so done, a reconciling and assimilating power is made to come upon the soul of man. The Godward action of the Atonement is first. Its Man-ward action follows, and is inseparable from the former in the apprehension and experience of all believers.

But even here, this intended satisfaction is not complete. What should be deemed sufficient for this purpose is a profound question. On that subject God only can speak with authority. His intelligence only can take in the whole case, and, in consequence, his word only can be final in relation to it. So far have we now ad-

vanced that we can see, in a measure, the fitness of the homage rendered by Christ to the Divine will, and of the suffering inseparable from that homage to contribute towards the discharging of the debt against law which had been incurred by humanity. Humanity had become rebellious, but humanity in Christ presents to the universe the highest form of loyalty and obedience to be found among creatures. We are not qualified, however, to say that even this should be accepted as enough, nor to say what further may not be indispensable. Here, as in much beside, we may know in part, and may come to a line where we must confess that knowledge fails us. Beyond is mystery.

In the suffering of Christ, in so far as we have now considered it, we see no direct infliction from the Almighty. But it must be remembered that all suffering is of the nature of penalty, and comes in some form or other in the wake of sin. Were the universe without sin it would be without suffering. Law is from God, and the penalty which is made to follow the violation of law is from Him: and from this cause it follows, that to suffer, whatever may be the innocence of the sufferer, and whatever the agencies may be that inflict the suffering, is to be under God's hand, and to suffer from Him. It is suffering which comes from law and penalty as always emanating from His supreme will. In sending His Son into this world, the Father delivered Him into the midst of those retributive influences which would be sure to subject Him, innocent as He may be, to His many pains and His many griefs. In this sense, the words of Isaiah apply to the whole field of the Redeemer's humiliation, and pain, and sorrow, 'It hath pleased the

'Lord to bruise Him; Thou hast put Him to grief.'* It avails nothing, therefore, as regards the moral aspect of this mystery, to say that they were men, or that they were evil spirits, who did this or that, inasmuch as such agencies could have had no power against Christ had it not been permitted to them by God. Hence to attribute the sufferings of Christ to purely created influences, may be to shift the ground of the difficulty a little farther back, but the difficulty remains, and is in no way diminished. In much of our current speculation on this subject this fact is strangely overlooked.

These considerations become specially important from the circumstance that many devout minds are not a little perplexed by the language which came from the lips of our Lord upon the cross, 'My God! my God! why hast 'Thou forsaken me?' Hitherto His conflict had been with sinning beings and with sin, now the Divine countenance, hitherto always with Him, seems to be withdrawn. From His prayer in the garden it is manifest the Father was with Him then. So even on the cross He prays, 'Father, forgive them;' and to the expiring thief He says, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' But a moment comes—one brief space it must have been—in which it seems He was to learn what that night-cloud is which comes over human souls in their hours of desertion, and was to know, as far as an innocent nature may know, what that outer darkness is of which souls are conscious when left alone and apart by the Creator. In so far He descended from the lowest spiritual deep on earth to a lower still.

In no stage of our Lord's passion can we hope to com-

* Isaiah liii. 10.

prehend all that it included; and in this last descent in His experience we feel especially incapable of following Him. Even here, however, it is not all mystery. On this whole subject there are certain lines which are clear as the light, and these certainties embrace all on which we really need certainty. It may be accepted as certain, that the suffering of Christ, in all the forms in which it is made known to us, was to contribute to the efficiency of His atonement, helping to complete such an act of homage to the just as should secure pardon and restoration to the unjust. These are saved, not simply because so much pain and grief have been endured in their stead, but because Christ has performed a great spiritual work in their behalf, and has performed it in the full foresight of all the suffering that would be inseparable from His so doing. It is monstrous to suppose that the Deity could be pleased with mere suffering. It is the spiritual essence in the Atonement that makes it to be what it is to us. It may be accepted as certain, that in the gift of the Son of God we have the brightest manifestation of the love of the Father; and that in the willing humiliation and grief of the Redeemer we have the tenderest revelation of pity towards the evil and unthankful, and at the same time the noblest act of worship ever rendered to the good and the holy. In this sense, it is truly by the sorrows, the death, the cross of Christ that we have salvation. It has been His will to become thus acquainted with grief, and to die—to die the death of the cross—that we might be saved.

What it might have been expedient and possible to do in such a case we could not possibly have foreseen. Facts have been made to bring this knowledge before

us. The history of redemption has settled what speculation concerning it must have abandoned in despair. It is our happy privilege now, not to have to ask what *might* be done—done effectually, in such an exigency, we have the answer to that question in what *has* been done. The Father delivers His Son to His great work; the Son willingly accepts the costly service devolved upon Him; and the Holy Spirit is prepared to impart to the souls of men all the blessings of the redemption so realised. So the fulness of the Godhead is with us. These are facts, and whatever mystery may lie down in the depths of them, they are sufficiently clear and certain to serve all the purposes of life and godliness.

Concerning the effect of the redemptive work of Christ, it is important to distinguish between its general and its particular influences — that is, between its influences as affecting humanity at large, and as affecting those who will ultimately be saved. With the Omniscient the future is as the present. All God's acts are God's thoughts embodied, made real to us; and all God's thoughts are, like Himself, from everlasting. When He created man in innocence He foresaw that man would become an offender. The scheme of redemption, accordingly, is as old in the Divine purpose as the scheme of creation. When sin lodged itself in the nature of our first parents, they might have been left to die, and humanity might have had beginning and end in their persons. Such, too, we can suppose would have been the course of things, had it not been predetermined that with the entrance of sin there should be the introduction of a new and special dispensation to counteract it. The world is to be peopled by the descendants of our

first parents, their offspring everywhere partaking more or less in the consequences of their fall. But the effects of the fall are to be checked and limited by the intervention of the mediatorial rule of the Son of God, who in the fulness of time is to become incarnate, and to be known as the Redeemer of mankind. The world now, is not to be under a dispensation of pure law, it is to be under a rule of grace in the hands of a Mediator. Man is to pass into a new state of probation. His future is to depend, not on his strict conformity to law, for that has become hopeless, but on his acceptance of offered salvation as the gift of God. Sin, in a sense, may continue to reign—to reign "even unto death, but by the side of it grace is to 'reign, through righteousness, unto 'eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' * All this is indicated in the strong outline of the first promise, 'I 'will put enmity between thee and the woman, between 'thy seed and her seed; thou shalt bruise his heel, but 'he shall bruise thine head.' † We have seen how the seed of the woman was to suffer—his heel was to be bruised. But his antagonist is to suffer more memorably—his head is to be struck, he is to be vanquished and made powerless.

It is in virtue of this mediatorial rule of the Son of God, that the condition of things in the moral and material world about us has come to be of so mixed a complexion. Men, depraved as they are, are not devils. The earth, disordered as it is, is not hell. Wide, we have reason to believe, is the distance between this dwelling-place of sinning men and the place allotted to

* Rom. v. 21. † Gen. iii. 15.

sinning angels. The sun shines upon the earth now as on the morning of creation. The moon walks in her brightness over us as she did over the bowers of Eden. The stars send their softened brilliancy over our path as they did over the footways of our first parents in innocence. The landscapes of the earth have not lost their grandeur or their beauty. The sea rivals the land in proclaiming the skill and power of Him who still holds it in the hollow of His hand. Good flows to the home and heart of man through channels innumerable, rendering his life—even a sinner's life, so sweet, that 'skin for skin, yea all that a man hath, will he give for 'his life.' All this is, because the Incarnation was to be. All this goodness is redeeming goodness. Creation and Providence are all this to us because of their relation to the Cross. Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe—and we can thus see the sense in which this language is true.* His heart was cheered by all these influences of His great work. He could look with a loving interest on every blooming flower, on the verdure that clothed the hill or dale with beauty, and on every face made bright by a natural gladness.

Nor is this the whole of the general effect of the Christian redemption. We have seen that it has altered the spiritual relation of the race to God. Humanity is no longer under the law, but under grace. The law indeed is in force, but there is deliverance from its condemning power through faith in the Cross. There is a sense, it seems, in which all men may be viewed as justified in Him, inasmuch as justification is made to be available

* 1 Tim. iv. 10.

to them all through Him. This must be the meaning of the apostle's language where he says, 'As by the offence 'of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; 'even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came 'upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one 'man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the 'obedience of one shall many be made righteous. More-'over, the law entered that the offence might abound. 'But where sin abounded grace did much more abound. 'That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might 'grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by 'Jesus Christ our Lord.' * What is here said, in so far as it concerns the effect of Adam's sin and of Christ's obedience in reference to the portion of the race who die in infancy, may be taken in its fullest and most literal meaning. The work of Christ as the second Adam, may be regarded as entirely counteracting the effects of the fall in relation to the future of infants. In Adam they all die, in Christ they shall all be made alive.

But to an intelligent exposition of the passage cited, it is necessary that we should look at it in connexion with the apostle's general teaching. Now the apostle iterates ceaselessly, that men are justified and saved only as they believe, and his language in this particular instance must be interpreted in accordance with this fact. In this same epistle the apostle thus writes, 'But now the 'righteousness of God without the law is manifested, 'being witnessed by the law and the prophets: even the 'righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ

* Rom. v. 18–21.

'unto all and upon *all them that believe.*'* 'If thou shalt 'confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt '*believe in thine heart* that God hath raised Him from 'the dead, thou *shalt be saved.*' 'For whosoever shall 'call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How 'then shall they call on Him in whom they *have not be-* '*lieved,* and how shall they *believe* in Him of whom 'they have not heard?'† As we bring together the many passages to this effect in the writings of the apostle, and the scores—one may say hundreds, besides of the same import in the New Testament, it becomes a marvellous thing that any man with the slightest measure of logical perception should find it possible to imagine that persons capable of believing and who do *not* believe, can have been viewed by the apostle as being really saved persons, or as persons in any real sense justified. That the obedience and merit of Christ do indeed affect the present condition of such persons, shielding them for a time from the penalties that would otherwise quickly come upon them, and presenting to them the possibility of being saved or justified, is sufficiently manifest. But to infer that men *are* justified, from the fact that they *might* be justified, is not very luminous reasoning. The mystification which can make its way to such a conclusion in the face of the evidence opposed to it can make its way to anything. The death of Christ had respect, not to persons, but to humanity. He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world—that is, this provision as a basis for pardon, is such that all the world might be saved by this means.

* Rom. iii. 21–22. † Ibid. x. 9, 13, 14.

In conclusion, it will be evident that the view we have taken of the Atonement has not been the objective view alone—that is, its design to render satisfaction to the Divine law and honour, as infringed and contemned by sin. Nor has it been the subjective view alone—that is, its design to attract men to an imitation of a beautiful and sublime example of obedience and self-sacrifice to the Divine will, as being the essence of all rectitude and goodness. We accept the doctrine in both these views. So much suffering would be utterly inexplicable to us if its design were merely to present a higher form of example. The agony in the garden is wholly inexplicable on such a theory. And to be told that we should accept as a Saviour one who simply says to our guilty and weak nature, study what I am, and become the same, would be only to mock our misery. Our consciousness demands that more should be done in the way of satisfaction to God than we can do; and it further tells us, that if our future is to be a future of which we shall be prepared to say it is enough, that future must become ours as the result of influences wonderfully more potent than anything we can hope to summon into action from within ourselves. A sentimental atonement does not ascend high enough for us, nor does it descend low enough. It provides neither for God nor man on a scale at all adequate to the necessity. We cannot be bold to ask forgiveness, if we cannot be certain that there is a basis on which forgiveness may be exercised honourably. Nor can we give ourselves to the strife and perils of a Christian life with hope of success, except as we can hope for Divine assistance. Where the grace of the Holy Spirit is recognised, this hope of

finding our spirits more assimilated to the mind of Christ may not be in vain. But minds which are disposed to look to what they account the moral power of the character of Christ, to the exclusion of the generally received doctrine concerning His atonement, commonly evince a disposition to look to that source of renovation to the exclusion, or all but the exclusion, of the work of the Holy Spirit. By the first step an entrance has been made on the decline towards Naturalism, and nothing is more conceivable than that a descending movement should become one of an ever-increasing momentum. But confiding in the priestly intercession of our Lord, and in the promised grace of the Holy Spirit, we may listen in hopefulness to the words of the apostle when he says, 'Let this mind be in you that was also in 'Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought 'it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself 'of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a 'servant, and was made in the likeness of man: and 'being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, 'and became obedient unto death, even the death of the 'cross.' *

* Philip. ii. 5–8.

SECTION VII.

PARDON AND JUSTIFICATION.

WHEN God determined to send His truth into the world, He did not determine, as by a perpetual miracle, to guard it against the possibility of corruption. Christ was Himself to pass through the depraved atmosphere of this world untainted; and the gates of hell were not to prevail against His doctrine. But though error was not to prevail against the truth, it was not said that truth should suffer nothing in the conflict awaiting it. The reverse was inevitable. The stream would not flow deep and far through an impure soil, and contract no impurity in so doing. Hence the history of Christian doctrine has come to be very largely a history of human thought and feeling in the communities which have embraced it. Everywhere this doctrine bears the impress, not of God only, but of man, and to separate between the human and the Divine in all cases is by no means an easy process.

As may be supposed, in the history of doctrines, the history of the Atonement, the great centre truth of Christianity, presents marked illustration of the manner in which the thought and passion of past ages have

influenced the apprehensions of men concerning revealed truth. Some men would have us believe that the doctrine of the Atonement as now commonly received is not older than the days of Anselm. During the thousand years preceding his time, it is said, those who spoke of satisfaction for sin as made by the death of Christ, spoke of it as made, not to God, but to Satan, as the price of man's release from his power. It was left to Anselm, we are told, to depose Satan from this high place, as the rival of God in this great transaction, and to describe the satisfaction made, as made, not to the Evil One, but to the Divine law and honour.

But the men who so write are not infallible, either as theologians or historians. The case is not exactly so. Anselm wrote much more scripturally on this subject than many of his predecessors. He gave a distinctness, and a scientific form, to his thoughts in relation to it, especially in reference to human responsibility, and to sin as a debt due to God. The Atonement, in his view, was a satisfaction made to God for that debt, and was the condition of the sinner's release. But we are not prepared to cede that these ideas were really new to the Church. Conceptions of the doctrine in their substance to this effect, can be traced far back, even to the beginning.

It should not be forgotten, that the inspired writers themselves speak of the Son of God as manifest that He might destroy the works of the Devil; of carnal men as led captive by the Devil; and of redeemed men as passing from the power of Satan unto God.* Even Anselm

* 1 John iii. 8; 2 Tim. ii. 26; Acts xxv. 18.

does not scruple to use similar expressions. That some writers before the age of Anselm should have expressed themselves too strongly in this direction is hardly surprising. It would indeed be easy to cite language very exceptionable on this ground from many writers among ourselves, and especially from many of our modern hymns. Nor is it too much to say that there is a sense in which sinners may be said to be lawful captives to the author of sin. 'His ye are whom ye obey.'* Our common ideas suggest, that if captives are to be liberated, it must be by ransom, and in ordinary cases the ransom is paid to the spoiler. What is done, moreover, in this case, if not done to satisfy Satan, is done in part to silence him—that is, to demonstrate to the moral universe that God declares His righteousness, in place of surrendering it, in the pardon of sin. In fact, there is enough in the various aspects of this doctrine to account for not a little confusion of thought, and frequent inaccuracies of expression, concerning it. Men who become slaves to Satan are responsible, and become such by their own act. Satan indeed may be said to ensnare his victims by falsehood, and on that ground his claim in relation to them may be questioned.

That the Apostolic Fathers were believers in the Atonement is sufficiently manifest from their writings. And later authors, who, in their conflicts with the Gnostics, avowed some confused notions on the subject, often spoke in such a manner as to show that they retained the substantial truth, while others gave it forth with great distinctness and emphasis. Barnabas in his epistle

* Rom. vi. 16.

says, 'The Lord condescended to deliver His body to 'death, that by remission of our sins we might be sancti- 'fied, and this thing is effected by the shedding of His 'blood.' Again he says, 'Christ presented His body as 'a sacrifice for our sins, that the type of Isaac sacrificed 'upon the altar might be fulfilled.' Barnabas cites the liiird of Isaiah, and the ceremony of the scape-goat, as illustrating this mystery. Clement of Rome, in his epistle to the Corinthians, says, 'Let us look on the 'blood of Christ, and how precious it is to God, which 'having been shed with a view to our salvation, has 'obtained the grace of repentance for all the world.' Again, 'His blood has been shed for our salvation, 'He has, according to God's will, given His body for 'our body, His soul for our soul.' Clement, too, cites Isaiah liii. as expressive of his doctrine. Polycarp, the disciple of John, in his epistle to the Philippians, has expressions equally strong, 'Christ is the One who 'gave Himself to God an offering and sacrifice for sins.' And I must cite the memorable words in the epistle to Diognetus, 'Oh! the exceeding greatness of His love to 'man! He hated us not, nor rejected us, nor showed 'Himself unmindful of our unworthiness; but patiently 'bore and suffered it. He Himself took our iniquities. 'He delivered His own Son as a ransom for us—the holy 'one for the lawless; the spotless for the vile; the just 'for the unjust; the incorruptible for the corruptible; 'the immortal for the mortal. What other thing than 'His righteousness can cover our sins? In whom could 'we lawless ones be justified but in the only begotten 'Son of God? Oh! the sweet substitution. Oh! the un- 'searchable arrangement of unexpected blessings, that

'the transgressions of many should be hidden in one 'Holy One, and the righteousness of One justify many 'transgressions.'

When we descend to Tertullian and Origen, we find this doctrine beginning to be disfigured by allusions to Satan, and his supposed pretensions of right in the natures he has seduced. But this does not prevent their expressing themselves in the main scripturally on this subject. 'If there had been no sin,' says Origen, 'there would have been no necessity that the Son of 'God should have become a Lamb, nor in the flesh have 'been led to the slaughter, but He would have remained 'that which He was from the beginning, God the Word; 'but since sin entered into the world, necessity required 'a propitiation for sin; and since propitiation is not 'made except by a sacrificial offering, it was necessary 'that the sacrifice be provided for sin.'* 'God the 'word, the truth, the wisdom, and the righteousness, 'did not die; for with the image of the invisible God, 'the first-born of every creature, that thought is incom-'patible. But this man, the most perfect and pure of 'all creatures, who took our sins, our infirmities, did die 'for the people, inasmuch as He was able (having taken 'upon Himself all the sin of the whole world, since He 'had no sin) to destroy, to deliver from, and utterly 'obliterate it.'† Here the idea clearly is that the design of the Saviour was to remove our sins by the force of His own purity and suffering. Gregory of Nazianzen denounces the idea that the ransom of the Cross was paid to Satan 'the robber,' in the most indignant terms,

* Homil. No. xxiv. † Ibid. No. xxviii.

and insists that what was done was not done with any reference to him, 'but on account of the Divine govern-'ment of the universe.' * Augustine, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Gregory the Great might all be cited as holding similar language. The doctrine of Paul on this subject is clear as the light, and the Church was never wholly to lose sight of it. The satisfaction made, he affirms, was satisfaction to a violated law, and to offended majesty. Anselm cleared this sublime truth from some of the puerilities which his predecessors had connected with it, and brought into it some of his own, but his doctrine was no novelty as compared with that of the apostolic age, and only partially so as compared with that of later times.†

But the measure in which schoolmen or fathers have retained the truth or lost it, is a comparatively small matter so long as we have the New Testament in a trustworthy state in our hands. Rationalists may flatter themselves with having proved whatever may happen to be agreeable to them concerning the history of opinion in the dark ages, our great concern is with the records which give us the truth as revealed to men in the first age. To this oracle we look, and whatever is not accordant with its responses must be error, however boldly it may attempt to usurp the place of God's truth. We say this concerning all human teaching, and especially when it affects to be our great authority on the great question—what must I do to be saved?

It pleases the Divine Being to give us mortals many

* Orat. xlii.

† *Cur Deus Homo.* For further information on this subject, see the *British Quarterly*, No. lxxxii. Art. 3; also No. lxvii. Art. 1.

a bright day during the life we here live; and when such days come it is fitting we should be grateful and enjoy them. But the day is not distant in which each one of us must come face to face with death—in which to us time will be no more, and eternity will be about to open its visions upon us; and then, of all the questions that have occupied our busy thoughts and hearts, the one leaving small space for any other will probably be—how shall I enter the Great Presence so as to find acceptance there!

To meet this great exigency of our spiritual being, we are assured that pardon and justification are the immediate and completed effects of the Gospel to every believer. To believe is to be forgiven and to be justified. There is a very intelligible distinction between these Divine acts. Pardon supposes guilt. Justification, in its primary and literal sense, supposes the absence of guilt. Speaking legally, the former consists simply in a release from penalty, while the latter rises to an honourable acquittal. Pardon may or may not embrace a restoration to favour. Justification always supposes it.

The Gospel is a proclamation of pardon. It is more than that, but it is that very distinctly. Pardon is especially connected with the suffering and death of Christ. In this part of His experience we see the price paid by Him that sin might be forgiven. His innocence demanded that He should be exempt from suffering. All that He did suffer, accordingly, He must have suffered from choice, and for others, and that through Him, as the apostle affirms, might be 'preached the forgiveness 'of sins' to all that should believe on Him.'* 'The God

* Acts xviii. 38.

'of our fathers,' says Peter, 'raised up Jesus whom ye 'slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with 'His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give 'repentance to Israel and remission of sins.'* So came the voice of God to Saul on his way to Damascus—'Rise 'and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto 'thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a 'witness—delivering thee from the people and from the 'Gentiles to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, and 'to turn them from darkness to light, and from the 'power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the 'forgiveness of sins.'† So when writing to the Ephesians, and again to the Colossians, the apostle says, speaking of Christ—'In whom we have redemption through His 'blood, the forgiveness of sins.' It is the *blood* of Christ that 'cleanseth from all sin.' It is by it that we are 'redeemed,' and not by corruptible things as silver and gold. It is by this that the redeemed in heaven have been washed from their sins, and made kings and priests unto God. It is His *death* that gives to us the life which had been legally forfeited. It is His *cross* that brings salvation. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He 'was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our 'peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.'‡ All that is said in these texts, and in a multitude resembling them, may be said to be included in John's memorable proclamation—'Behold the Lamb of God that 'taketh away the sin of the world.'§

It scarcely need be said that the suffering and death of Christ could not have possessed the value attributed

* Acts v. 30, 31.
† Isaiah liii.
‡ Acts xxvi. 16–18.
§ John i. 29.

to them had He not been Himself innocent; nor could they have been of such efficacy even then had He not been Divine as well as human. The suffering from which the redeemed are saved by Christ is said to be everlasting. But it must not be supposed that the suffering of Christ was the equivalent of that aggregate of suffering as to amount. That was simply impossible. The redeemed are a multitude which no man can number. No human spirit could have borne up under a burden so utterly incalculable and inconceivable. Nor was it possible that the sufferings of our Lord should have been a strict equivalent for the sufferings of the lost in respect to their nature, any more than their amount. There are experiences natural to depraved beings which innocent beings cannot know. Remorse, and the anguish which comes from disordered passions, must be foreign to the nature of pure existences. Christ might suffer for a Judas or a Herod, but He could never have suffered after their manner as offenders. There was, however, a spiritual value in the voluntary suffering possible to His innocent nature, especially as being allied with His greatness, more than enough to outweigh the penalty to which the guilty were exposed. If we are saved in any sense through the merits of Christ, whence could those merits have come if not from that source?

The Christian cannot too soon free his mind from the thought that mere suffering cannot be of any moral or spiritual worth. Our Lord's suffering was greater than we can comprehend, but our concern really is, not with its extent, but with its nature—with the goodness that was in it as opposed to the evil it was designed to remove. The idea that we are saved by the mere amount

of the pain and grief endured by Christ is a false and mischievous conception of His work. It presents the Divine Being to our view under an aspect, which, in place of being attractive, is revolting. He has no delight in suffering. He never choses it for its own sake. In Christ there was no portion of it except as designed to bring into action the highest spiritual intelligence, and to realise the highest spiritual purpose. Our Lord was to be made mediatorially perfect through suffering. For that purpose He suffered, and for that alone. Unintelligent and aimless endurance can be of no worth in the sight of the All-wise and All-beneficent. But the endurance which is sustained by a Divine intelligence, and which aims at the Godlike, is another matter.

Welcome to the penitent are such conceptions of God and of Christ. He can love the Father, who, in the case of Jesus, as in his own case, does not afflict willingly. He can adore the passion of the Saviour, as designed all through to realise creature greatness and creature happiness in the manner most consistent with the Divine honour. We have forgiveness of sin through the humiliation, the sorrow, and the death of Christ; but through all this His experiences were such as befell Him necessarily from the work He had to do, and the relations in which He willingly placed Himself both towards God and man. So viewed there is nothing in the suffering of Christ with which the penitent may not in a measure have fellowship. The history of this great achievement is seen to be all-beautiful—Divine; and the sinner who seeks forgiveness through this medium can seek it with confidence as he perceives that God may grant it with honour; and may seek it with a deeper earnestness as he

perceives that there is nothing in the process through which pardon has become possible to him, to which he does not long to be himself conformed. The way of forgiveness, as thus seen, goes far towards winning back our whole nature to God. The teaching of the Atonement is, that sin shall be shown to be as evil as it really is in the eyes of the offender—shall be denounced, branded, execrated, and still there shall be forgiveness. It is to this end that the highest nature descends to the level of the lowest, the richest becomes the poorest. Innocence suffers, passes through a sea of suffering, that the sinner may have a friend. Goodness becomes sorrow-smitten, heart-broken, in its effort to reach the fallen, the forsaken, the hopeless. The human spirit, struggling amidst the deep waters of its guilt, every dark wave menacing it with death, has often looked above those fearful breakers to that countenance on which earth's deepest sorrow rested, and has felt hope rise within it, and has seemed to pass from death into life. Often in that presence the sinews of the firmest among offenders have been relaxed, the brow of the most hardened has been smoothed, the heart least likely to melt has been subdued. By this manifestation of goodness even such natures have been constrained to cherish the hope of goodness. If it be fiction that has done this, then fiction has done something more good and beautiful than can be shown to have been accomplished by any truth that has come from the Creator. Is it so, that falsehood has done more to realise the Godlike in our nature than has been done by its opposite? If so, where is God? What is He? In whose world are we living?

The hope of the penitent may be further strengthened

by remembering that the atonement of Christ is not made with any particular reference to persons, but had respect to humanity. Its object was so far to atone for human guilt, without respect to persons, that Christ might be truly described as 'the Lamb of God who 'taketh away the sin of *the world*;' that the apostle might be warranted in saying that He had become a 'pro-'pitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the 'sins of the *whole world*;' and that the Gospel might be preached consistently and honestly in His name 'to every 'creature.' The grand satisfaction made for sin has respect to all men, to those who will reject it and perish, no less certainly than to those who shall receive it and live. The sin of Adam has affected the condition of the whole race, and in so far the effect of the work of Christ is to be commensurate with it. If we perish now, it will be, not because we have sinned in Adam, but because we have rejected salvation by Christ.

The fact that the forgiveness offered in the Gospel is offered freely—as the gift of God, and not as the result of merit in any form, is another feature of this subject which has never failed to touch the heart of the penitent, and to awaken gratitude and hope. The words of the Saviour which remind us of this fact, are happily very familiar to our ears. 'Come unto me all ye that are 'weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'* 'If 'any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.'† 'As 'Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so 'must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever 'believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting 'life.'‡ 'Ask that ye may receive, seek that ye may find,

* Matt. xi. 18. † John vii. 10. ‡ John iii. 14.

'knock that the door may be opened, for whosoever 'asketh receiveth, and whosoever seeketh findeth, and to 'him that knocketh the door shall be opened.'* All but the last words in the inspired volume are these: 'The 'Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him that heareth 'say come, and let him who is athirst come, and whoso- 'ever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life 'freely.'† The prodigal has but to say, 'I will arise 'and go to my Father,' and the parental arms are open to receive him.

Here the old objection may arise, that to teach thus is to exaggerate faith and to depreciate works. But we intend nothing of the kind. Faith in our view is a great spiritual act—an eminently religious act. Faith always supposes an object. Believing always supposes things that are believed. When the object of faith is spiritual, the act of faith embracing it must, from the nature of the case, be spiritual. But nothing can be more deeply spiritual than the truth embraced by man when he casts himself on the mercy and grace of God revealed in the Gospel. In that act the penitent confesses the truth of the charges preferred against him—the charges of guilt and depravity, of ruinous guilt, of ruinous depravity. He accepts the mercy and grace proffered him — the mercy that he may be forgiven, the grace that he may become holy. In this manner, the faith of the Christian believer is made to include in it the germs of that new and Divine life which it is the design of the Gospel to realise and perfect. All discourse, accordingly, about faith, as if it were antagonist to works, is simply childish. The only faith which the Scriptures value may be said to be a faith

* Matt. vii. 7; Luke xi. 9. † Rev. xxii. 17.

which includes all works, being the only root from which true spiritual works may come. But spiritual as true faith may be, and good as the works which will be sure to flow from it may be, it is not by our faith, or by the works which flow from it, that we are saved, but through His merit to whom we owe the possibility of our becoming possessed of either faith or works.

We have glanced at the distinction between pardon and justification. It will be proper to return for a little to that distinction before we leave this subject. The exact meaning of the word justification is very obvious. It is taken from law-courts. It denotes the opposite of to *condemn*—it means to acquit. Thus Paul says, 'Who shall 'lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that 'justifieth?'* Here accusation is supposed, and the accusation may be said to have been valid, inasmuch as even the elect have all been sinners; but justification—acquittal—is said to follow. The same apostle further says, 'The judg-'ment was by one to *condemnation*, but the free gift is of 'many offences to *justification*. As by the offence of one, 'judgment came upon all men to *condemnation*, even so 'by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all 'men unto *justification* of life.'† Here justification is used in the sense of *declaring* or *pronouncing* righteous, in distinction from pardon, which supposes *proved unrighteousness*, and a distinction from sanctification, which consists in *making* righteous. Hence even Dr. Newman, in his elaborate treatise on this doctrine, says, 'Unless it 'can be shown that courts of law *make* men innocent, 'instead of *declaring* them so, justification is a declaration, 'not a making.'‡ In fact, there is not an instance in

* Rom. viii. 33. † Rom. v. 16–18.
‡ *Lectures on Justification*, 75.

Scripture in which the word is not used in the sense of showing or declaring. As we have said, faith is a spiritual act, and insures renewal, or sanctification; but sanctification is the effect, faith is the instrumental cause; and however near the relation between cause and effect may be, sound philosophy requires that we should not confound the one with the other. This, however, is the way of the Church of Rome, and of all men who shape their theology after that type.

We regard the fuller presentation of the doctrine of justification by faith in the writings of Paul, as one of the blessed results that were to be secured to the Church by the promised larger presence of the Holy Spirit after the day of Pentecost. It is no dishonour to the great Teacher to suppose that He left the truth concerning the great design of His life and death to be set forth in its completeness when that life had closed, and when that death had come to be a fact and of the past. It was in accordance with the progress of the principle which pervades revelation, and with much in the language of our Lord, that it should have been so. We all remember His words—'I have many things to say to you, but ye 'cannot bear them now.'

By justification our pious people generally understand a legal acquittal, and not merely pardon; and they sometimes speak of the righteousness of Christ (after Paul's manner) as a robe in which they hope to appear before the Supreme Judge, and to be pronounced just. But it is not difficult to see that this is nothing more than a strong mode of expressing a very intelligible truth. They do not suppose that the personal righteousness of Christ is taken from Him, and given to them, so that He loses what they gain. The idea is so irrational

that one hesitates putting it into writing. Our Lord's righteousness is His own habit of being—His nature, and, as such, cannot possibly pass to another. Coming into this world in our nature, it became Him in that nature to fulfil all righteousness. Perfect obedience was possible to Him, was in consequence binding upon Him, and having rendered it, He had done no more than it was His duty to do. Had He been man only, His obedience might have availed for Himself, it could not have availed for others. But He was Divine as well as human. On this ground His suffering and His righteousness have a value that could not otherwise belong to them. The descent of so much greatness to such a service dignifies the service, and makes it the highest ever rendered to the will of the Uncreated. If it be not this greatness of the Redeemer's nature that has given this needed value to His obedience and suffering, then we may confidently affirm that they have not this value, and we have no Saviour. It is not possible that one possessed of only human merit should be able to redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him. His perfect Humanity becomes what it is to us from its relation to perfect Deity. Faith in the righteousness thus perfected includes the seeds of an approval of that righteousness, and of an ultimate conformity to it, but its effect on justification is, that it gives the believer the legal benefit of it as if it were his own.

To a clear understanding on this subject it is of the first importance to bear in mind, that when the sacred writers make use of earthly things to shadow forth the heavenly, they so do, not on the ground that the earthly

is in all particulars the image of the heavenly—for that it never is—but on the ground of some strong point of resemblance between them which, in itself, is sufficiently marked to warrant the comparison. The point of resemblance in this instance is not that the justified believer is really just, as the justified man in a court of law is supposed to be, but that the *effect* of his relation by faith to the righteousness of Christ, is all to him that the absence of conviction in the other case is known to be. So far the identity is complete. But it does not go farther; for while the party justified in a court of law is supposed to have been really just, the justification of the believer through Christ is affirmed by inspiration itself to be 'the justification of the ungodly.' But justification it is. The righteousness of Christ in this respect is all to him that it would be if it were his own. What more natural than that a righteousness thus imputed to him, reckoned to him, viewed as though it were his own, should be spoken of in moments of impassioned thankfulness as though it *were* really his own? In the face of law and penalty, it is to him all that it would be even then. So, in his view, the majesty of right in relation to the Divine nature and government is saved, consistently with his pardon, his justification, and with his final restoration to the image and presence of his Maker. 'I count all things but loss for the ex-
'cellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:
'for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do
'count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be
'found in Him, not having mine own righteousness
'which is of the law, but that which is through the

'faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by 'faith.' *

Some men persist in flouting against this doctrine as a fiction, as a thing of pretence, an unreality. It does not seem to be possible to them to see on whom this charge of dealing in shams really falls. If language can have meaning, it would seem to be the mind of Paul that is thus contemned, and his teaching that is thus traduced. If to pronounce believers as just through Christ, who are not just in themselves, be to some men an unreality, it certainly does not seem to have been such in the light of Paul's intelligence. In his language, as just cited, there can be no sense at all, if the sense we have put upon it be not admitted.

The notion that the teaching of the apostle in this view of it must be unfavourable to holiness, and even to morality, comes from a very limited and confused apprehension of the subject. The great difficulty with ordinary minds, is to elevate them into an admiration of the perfect. Men are everywhere disposed to be 'measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing 'themselves among themselves,' in place of looking to the highest standard. Much is gained if they can only be made to apprehend spiritual things sufficiently to see that the commandments of the Lord are exceedingly broad —that they compass a wonderful range of duty, and reach to marvellous depths in man's spiritual nature. It is given to some men to see what humanity *should* be, and to be so far conscious of their sins and failures as to shrink from the thought of being judged by that rule. Generally, it is not a low moral sense, or a low spiritu-

* Philip. iii. 8, 9.

ality, which disposes men to welcome the doctrine of justification by faith. It is the reverse. The persons who scorn this doctrine are too commonly persons who are not only wanting in spirituality, but enemies to it, and who would raise an empty formalism, or a life of mere social decency into its place. Whereas the men who have a devout appreciation of this truth have been almost invariably men who have been trained into that state of mind through deep spiritual conflict. Men who confide in this truth with an intensity of interest which no words can describe, have come into this spiritual state from the deep reverence of the Divine purity which their spiritual insight has enabled them to discern, and they have thus learnt to desire that when they go into the Divine presence, they might appear there clothed in a better righteousness than their own. Fools may pass into that presence knowing little of what it means; with the wise it is not so. Good men cannot be all they should be or would be, but they have given their heart's love to Him who has become to them the end of the law for righteousness, and they would fain be accepted in Him, as if clothed by Him. Next to being perfect, is the condition of soul which enables us to admire the perfect, which renders contentment impossible so long as we are not perfect, and which teaches us so to reverence the Divine holiness, as to dread appearing in that presence, except through the perfect obedience of Him who has become our Representative and Lord. The believer has shown his true fealty to law by the feeling with which he regards the embodiment of law in the character of Christ. He has thus passed over to the loyal side, and in the end his loyalty shall become perfect.

It is this near relation of the doctrine of justification by faith to the religious life of man, that has secured to it such prominence in the history of the Church. Some men, indeed, would have us regard it as a dogma special to Luther and the Reformers*; but though it had come to be in a great measure a forgotten truth in that age, it may be safely affirmed that since the age in which Paul preached it with so much fervour, it had not ceased to commend itself more or less to the consciousness of earnest souls. Certain it is, that the Reformers themselves, both English and Continental, were at much pains to assert and to demonstrate that their teaching in this respect was really no novelty, whatever Rome might say to the contrary.

The Lutherans, after stating their view of this doctrine, say, '*And thus do the holy fathers teach*; and there 'is a notable sentence in St. Ambrose, worthy the 'remembering, in these words:—"This God hath ap-'pointed that he who believeth in Christ shall be saved, '*without any worth, by faith alone*, receiving the remission 'of sins." Herein we do not bring in a new-formed opi-'nion into the Church of God. For the Scripture doth 'set down at large this doctrine concerning faith; and 'St. Paul doth especially handle this point in some of his 'epistles: *the holy fathers do also teach the same.*'* So in the Church of England Homily on Justification, published by authority to be read in all churches, we have these words:—'That we be justified *by faith only*, '*freely and without works*, we do read oftentimes in the 'best and most eminent writers; as beside Hilary, 'Basil, and St. Ambrose, we read the same in Origen,

* *Harmony of Confessions*, 170–178.

'St. Chrysostom, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Prosper, 'Œcumenius, Proclus, Bernardus, Anselm, and many 'other writers, Greek and Latin.'

It is quite true that we do not find the doctrine of justification by faith explained and elaborated in a formal manner in the decision of councils or in the decrees of the Church. It is in this respect with this doctrine as it was with the doctrine of inspiration, little is said concerning it in the way of explanation or defence, inasmuch as there was a general agreement among the more intelligent of the clergy on the subject. Had there been differences and disputes on this matter, as concerning the Trinity, we should have had confessions in relation to it coming down to us side by side with the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. But the Pelagian controversy was the only controversy of any significance bearing upon this point, and that false speculation was so wide of the truth, as not to necessitate anything beyond the general assertion that man is pardoned and saved by the merits of Christ, and not by merit of his own. It may be useful, perhaps, to cite a few passages, from the long series that might be adduced, in which the writers in the ancient Church express themselves clearly on this subject.

Clement of Rome, who is commended to our confidence by an apostle,* thus writes:—'We also, being called 'through His will in Jesus Christ, are not justified 'through ourselves, neither through our own wisdom, or 'understanding, or piety, or work which we have done 'in holiness of heart, but through faith,—faith, that is to 'say, through which Almighty God hath justified all

* Philip. iv. 3.

'that ever lived. Shall we then depart from good deeds? 'God forbid!'* Irenæus, who listened to the teaching of the apostle John, says:—'For as through the disobe-'dience of one man who first was fashioned out of the 'rude earth many were made sinners, and perfected life; 'so it behoved also that through the obedience of One 'man who first was born from the Virgin, many should 'be *justified*, and *receive salvation*. The Lord was not 'unknown to Abraham, whose day he desired to see. 'For he had learned from the word of the Lord and 'believed Him. Wherefore also by the Lord it was *im-'puted to him for righteousness*. Faith which is to God '*justifies* a man.' 'Now, without the law the right-'eousness of God is manifested, being witnessed by the 'law and the prophets; for the just shall live by faith.'† Even Clement of Alexandria, no very safe guide generally, says, 'Abraham was justified, not by works but 'by faith—therefore, says the apostle, we have been 'justified *in the name* of the Lord, that is, if I may so 'speak, ye have been made by him to be *just*, even as '*himself*.'‡ To be thus just must have been to be just by imputation, it could not be by personal holiness. We pass to Cyprian. 'If Abraham *believed* in God, and 'it was *imputed to him for righteousness*, then every man 'who believes in God, and *lives by faith*, is found to be 'a *righteous person*; and long service in faithful Abraham, 'is shown to be blessed and *justified*. This the blessed 'apostle Paul demonstrates when he says—Abraham 'believed in God, and it was imputed to him for right-'eousness. God *justifies* the nations through faith.'§

* Ep. ad Philip. § 1, 2. † *Adv. Hær.* lib. ii. 20; iv. 13, 67.
‡ Strom. lib. i. 288; vii. 752. § Opera ii. 125, 270.

Basil in his sermon on humility says, 'This is sound 'rejoicing in God, when a man is not puffed up by reason 'of his own righteousness, but acknowledges that he 'stands in need of true righteousness, and that he is '*justified by faith alone in Christ.*' St. Jerome's exposition of the Epistle to the Romans is strikingly in harmony with the apostle's teaching on this subject. Chrysostom, too, in his homilies on the same Epistle, though his eloquence is generally lavished on practical and not on doctrinal topics, repeats the doctrine concerning Abraham as being justified by faith, and concerning all believers as justified after that pattern. 'Let there no 'longer then be any doubt, for it (acceptance with God) 'is *not from works, but from faith.*'

Augustine, indeed, is not always consistent in his use of the word justification. His great doctrine of salvation by grace looks immediately to the conversion and sanctification of the soul, and there are connexions in which he speaks of a sort of justification as resulting from the personal righteousness so produced. But in these passages the term is used to denote justification before men, or the justification of hope in the believer from his personal experience, and not justification before God. Even Dr. Newman admits that Augustine saw the distinction between justification and sanctification as clearly as Luther did, though he spoke of the distinction with 'less uniformity of expression than Luther, 'and no exaggeration, and a preference of practical 'to scientific statements.' * It would indeed have been strange if the man who was to do so much to impregnate the Western Church through so many centuries

* *Lectures*, 70.

with his doctrine of grace had wholly, or even materially, missed his way on this subject. That he had not so done the following extracts are sufficient to show.

'When the apostle says that in his judgment a man 'is justified by faith without the works of the law, he 'says not this that the works of righteousness may be 'contemned after the reception and profession of faith, 'but only as teaching that each person should know the 'possibility of his being justified through *faith*, even 'though the works of the law shall not have gone before. '*For good works follow* AFTER *a justified person, and do not* 'go before in order that he may be justified.—*Man can* 'work no righteousness unless he be first justified.—Good 'works *preceding* justification do *not* show what man 'has *merited*, but good works following *after* justification 'show what he has *received*.' * Ambrose, Anselm, Bernard, and Bradwardine, are voices specially audible among those who reiterate this doctrine through the middle ages. Justification in the above passages can have had but one meaning. The term must have been used to denote acquittal as opposed to condemnation, and this is to come, not from personal righteousness, but from faith in the righteousness of another.

Here the harbour of refuge opens before us, into which souls driven by a sense of guilt into a thousand perilous ways may run, and find security and rest. The penances of superstition are vain. The balancing of virtue against vice, or of the fruits of faith against the want of them, must leave a fearful debt uncancelled. Hope lies not that way. It must come from the cross.

* De Fide et Operib. cxiv.; Enarr. in Psalm cx.; Expos. Evan. Ioan., Tract. iii.

All that is needed is, that the sin-stricken wanderer should look to the hand that *can* save and he *shall* be saved. The great heart of the generations long past has felt the need of this helper, and the heart of the ages to come will feel it.

SECTION VIII.

ON SPIRITUAL INFLUENCES.

WE have glanced at the testimony of consciousness as to the capacities, and the implied destiny of the spiritual nature of man. We have also questioned this consciousness as to the present condition of humanity. We have seen that it is not more clear that man was designed to live a moral and religious life, than that his present state is one of deep moral and religious deterioration. We have seen that his great need is the need of religious teaching and of religious help—of teaching, that he may know how the pardon of his sin and the renovation of his nature may be secured; and of help, that he may be enabled to avail himself of this knowledge so as to attain to the state of forgiveness and regeneration which has been made possible to him. What the truth is concerning the way of pardon has been explained; what it is concerning the way in which human spirits are renewed, and restored to the Divine image, remains to be considered.

With a large class of educated men there is no disposition to give any adequate thought to this subject.

Our age is eminently a scientific age. The physical discoveries made within the last two centuries present signs of progress in that direction far greater than had been realised through all the preceding centuries. Since the days of Bacon and Galileo this movement has been one of constantly accelerated speed, until the momentum has become startling, and seems to promise that what would have been deemed romance in the past, is to become history in the future. But man is a being to whom no great good ever comes without some measure of drawback. Use and abuse go with him in all his ways. The wisdom which qualifies him to make a sound use of his acquisitions, is sure to be more or less allied with the folly which reads in them lessons they were never designed to teach.

Not a few men have become so skilled in tracing natural phenomena to natural laws, that they have allowed their intelligence to halt amidst things purely natural, losing sight of the supernatural. Second causes, in place of leading upwards to a First cause, have been so interpreted as to preclude that higher action, though all other action must be dependent on it. The universe is represented as a vast and complex machine, the Creator—if Creator there be—comes to be a great mechanist, who, having adjusted the relations and forces of His handiwork, has withdrawn to a distance to look at it as it performs the evolutions He has assigned to it. Suns and systems, earth and air, are self-regulating and self-correcting powers, and the moral nature of man is the same—mechanism still, self-taught, self-governed, or self-destroyed, as the case may be. God is neither in man nor about him. He is far away. The

forces of this machine may menace our insect nature as placed within it in a thousand terrible ways, but there is no God to hear our cry, shriek as we may. Everywhere we are face to face with law—stern, inexorable, resistless law. Nor is it from acts of our own merely that these dread exigencies may come. The disorders brought in by the villains of the world fall largely upon its innocents, and these wronged ones may send up their piteous wail to the All-powerful day and night, but they will do so in vain. Mere law, with the heart of a savage, tells them that their world is fatherless, that they are themselves fatherless.

But this conception of God and nature is as irrational as it is irreligious. Deity cannot be limited to place. His power cannot be dispensed with where there is to be any power. And if God must *be* everywhere, how comes it to pass that He is to *act* nowhere? Material laws are unconscious: they have nothing which they have not received from the Divine hand, and by what imaginable process have they become capable of sustaining themselves and regulating themselves? The thing is inconceivable. Independent existence we have been wont to regard as an essential attribute of Deity. Has this attribute passed to the laws of the matter which He has created?

It is not enough, however, to cede that God is with these laws, and that He works through them and by them. Above the world of matter is the world of mind. The word 'nature' is applicable to matter and its laws, it is not applicable to mind, whether in man or God. Matter and mind are distinct, the former is subservient to the latter. In this sense the region of mind, of spirit

everywhere, is the region of the supernatural. Matter is obeying the will of man every day in ways innumerable. Shall we say less of God? Man is ever laying his hand on natural causes, and makes them do things without limit that they would never have done except under his guidance and power. What is this but the subjection of matter to mind, of nature to what is not of it, is above it—is the supernatural? And what is the supposed providence of God, or even miracle in its highest form, beyond this? It is clear that natural laws are not equal to supply the wants of our earthly state. We have to make them so by the action of our spiritual intelligence. Our food, our clothing, our dwellings, the embellishments of life, all become ours from the dominion of our mind over the material world about us. If nature be a machine, it is clear that man is not, and that in his hand even nature's mechanism becomes wonderfully flexible, contributing to physical and moral results without end to which it would never have contributed but for the rule extended over it by his kingship.

If the supernaturalism with which we are thus familiar be well considered, there needs not be anything incredible to us in the supernaturalism set forth by revelation. It is true man is governed by motives. But his will is free. If not—if our minds are only parts in a great scheme of mechanism, then why these monuments to heroes? why these festivals to martyrs? If those men became what they were by purely mechanical causes—were fated to become such, why hold them in this memory? On the other hand, if they became what they were by their own high and noble choice, what

a gulf separates between mind as governed by conscious motive, and mere nature as governed by unconscious law?

It is a great mistake to suppose that we save the dignity of the universe, and the majesty of the Creator, by precluding the Divine Being from all action in relation to His works. To our moral nature the universe becomes an appalling fatalism when thus viewed, and the Deity a Grand Lama. The idea seems to be, that any intervention of the Deity in human affairs must be by a sort of irruption into the domain of law,—of law which He has Himself established. But no conception can be more needless. We ourselves supply arms to the windmill, sails to the ship, steam-power to the railway, and we thus make the system of nature do what but for the presence of our thought it never would have done. And what law of nature is violated in these things, or in a thousand things like them? No doubt, man often places himself in antagonism to law, and has to bear the penalty; but he more often puts himself into the groove of law, and achieves marvellous things by so doing; and need it be said that what may be done there by his limited skill is as nothing, compared with what may be done there by the skill of the Infinite, and all still be within the same limits, natural law being used merely to serve His own moral purpose? Man clothes society with wonders by means of his dominion over the natural world; and is it hard to suppose that the Deity should do far greater wonders for the spiritual world, and still restrict His operations to the bounds of law and order? Let the laws of the material system be all that some men say they are, still man must continue

to be what he is in relation to them, and God must continue to be what He is in relation to them, and is the Deity to be shut out from all liberty to control material causes where man exercises so vast a dominion over them?

It is to be remembered too, that the nature with which we are familiar, wonderful as it is, is much too limited and marred to be accepted as the system of the universe. That is of a much wider and higher range, and the order of things about us exists, not for itself, but for the sake of something higher which is to follow. If so, what can be more reasonable than to imagine that God should interpose to regulate the present so as to secure that greater future; and what could be less reasonable than to imagine that He has left that issue to depend on the action of beings so cribbed and cabined as man is said to be in this world. For in fact, on such a view of things, the world has no ruler. Its laws may be of God, and their action may be from Him, but if He is not to make them pliant to His purpose by special action or combination, it is not He that rules, but the dumb forces that have been raised into His place. But the case is not so. He is a holy being, the end to which He lives is holy, and one of the first dictates of enlightened reason is, that He should make all natural things subserve that end.

The pride of physical science in our age is enormous: but strange to say its pride is too often matched by its short-sightedness. From the tone in which men discourse on this subject, we might suppose that to know the relations of cause and effect in the physical universe is the highest of all knowledge. It does not seem to be

suspected that the knowledge which halts there must be worthless. It is the intelligence which discovers these relations, and which applies them to their high uses, that gives to them all their value. In other words, it is not nature, but mind, which is above nature, that imparts to such secrets of nature all the worth they possess. It is true, the uses to which human intelligence can apply natural law are many and weighty. Still it is mind, and not nature, which makes these applications; and further, the applications themselves are really very limited. A gospel according to the promise of chemistry or of mechanical forces, however wonderful the chemistry or the forces may be, will prove but a cold and poor gospel to the sin-stricken soul of humanity. It is a bad time with us if we have no better condition of things before us than might be symbolised by a retort, or a pulley. According to much that we hear, we might conclude that the only Paradise left to be regained is one that might be denoted by such emblems. Mind is doomed by such philosophers to be ever delving in the earthly, never to ascend to the heavenly. The material is not to minister to the spiritual, but the spiritual is to be the tasked slave of the material. The true order of the universe is inverted by these seers of their generation. What should be last is first, and what should be first is last.

There is an artificial training that may dispose men to look at nature and man after this narrow and Godless manner, but the sentiment of humanity is against it. That sentiment has gone quite the other way. Its excesses may be easily explained, but that a sentiment so rooted in the mind of the race has been wholly a

delusion is hard to imagine. Heathenism everywhere blends Divine action with human affairs. The gods are everywhere, and everything is obedient to their will. The most enlightened men, in common with the most ignorant, hold substantially this truth. They regard the worlds of matter and of mind as thus pliant to a power above themselves. No man becomes a great man, said Cicero, without a 'Divine afflatus.' The ancients all so believed. Xenophon, Socrates, and Plato iterate this doctrine. Seneca and Marcus Antoninus preached it to the men of their times. These men were familiar with all that could be said against the lower forms of superstition. But they knew how to distinguish between such ill-regulated fancies, and conceptions which, if not absolutely true, were felt as having their foundation in truth. The words of Marcus Antoninus are very remarkable. 'So far as it depended on the 'gods,' he says, 'or on the suggestions, helps, and inspira-'tions proceeding thence, I might already have attained 'to a life agreeable to nature, if I had not been myself 'to blame, in neglecting to follow the admonitions and 'the almost express injunctions of the gods.' *

What we want in this English land, and down in the midst of this busy nineteenth century—want as a gain that would be to us as life from the dead, is a firm persuasion of God's presence with our human affairs, and of His influence, not only about us, but within us. If He be not thus present with us, where can be the object—the rationality of prayer? Religious men of all creeds have been praying men—must pray. In fact, the Light of the World is ever knocking at the door, now by

* Marci Antonini De Rebus Suis, lib. i. § 17.

frustrating our fond earthly schemes, now by bringing us face to face with the judgment seat through disease or accident, now summoning us to look upon our loved ones dead—in a thousand ways like these does the Incarnate One appeal to our susceptibilities of religious life, and we hearken to His voice and bid Him welcome, or we heed Him not, and bid Him go His way until some more convenient season. We have to do with a living God. We are in the midst of a living universe. Influences between heaven and earth, like the figures seen on the mystic ladder, are constantly descending and ascending, and spirits have been passing through all time, like an ever-widening stream of light, from this lower world to the higher, where the Highest Himself receives them as His own.

On this subject the instincts of religious life—if I may so speak—in all good men, and the dogmas of the learned in the history of the Church, have gone together. Ecclesiastical history is to a large extent a very unattractive region to a devout mind. We see it overlaid shamefully by the struggles of ambition, by a scramble for wealth, and by a love of ease and indulgence, leaving darkness to cover the earth and gross darkness the people. But that darkness is never without its spaces here and there where light may be traced, sometimes becoming beautifully luminous. Now if we go to those luminous places, to whatever land or age they may pertain, and if we enquire of the people there as to how it has come to pass that they have been able to present such signs of spiritual light and life, while all around them are sunk in the most besotted ignorance

and superstition, the answer coming from them all is the same. We believed, they say, that God, as revealed through Christ, is a God who hears and answers prayer; we prayed to Him that His Holy Spirit might be given to us to teach us, that so we might become truly wise; and to purify us, that so we might become indeed holy, and by the grace of God we are what we are.

Now this is a great fact that has come to us from the experience of a world's past. Have we not a right to say here concerning the doctrine of Divine influences, as we have said before concerning the doctrine of the Atonement—that if it be not truth, then it must follow that an untruth has been more allied with goodness in the history of humanity than any truth can be shown to have been? Seeing men as we commonly know them, whether in the past or the present, whoever expects to find a holy man who does not confess himself to be a man of prayer, a man looking above and beyond himself for more light and more life? Has all this come from a lie, and a lie that must be confessed to be broad as the earth, and to have been as enduring as its history? If this be so, can it be too much to say, that the Principle of Evil is indeed master of the field, and that all hope of deliverance from any higher power must be vain?

We all know, indeed, that there are men who would have us regard prayer as of no effect in relation to God, and as of value only in its tendency to give seriousness, and an improved habit, to the mind of the person who prays. God, it is said, is immutable in all that He is and in all that He does; and accordingly, is never diverted from His course by any supplication or

deprecation of ours. If it be really so, our case is indeed very pitiable.

It is admitted at once, that we should never look to the Divine Being to do the things for us which we may do for ourselves. It is not fitting that we should pray to God to save us from disease if we have failed to use the sanitary precautions which might have saved us from it. His intention in the whole scheme of His providence is to stimulate us to intelligent action, not to sink us into a stupid apathy. But the question here is —seeing we can ourselves so use the laws of nature as to protect ourselves against evils that would otherwise come upon us, and to secure for ourselves good we should not otherwise possess, is it not conceivable that there should be a use of those laws, higher than is possible to us, by which the Deity may shield and help us in answer to prayer? The man who can look at this question thoughtfully, and say—no, the thing is impossible, is to me a mystery. It may be true that God does nothing in time that He has not done in purpose from eternity; but then it is no less true that He sees nothing in me in time that He did not see from eternity. So that if we must go into the region of the Divine foresight and decrees, all my voluntary acts of prayer have been foreseen, and His answers to these prayers have also been foreseen and fore-ordained. God is immutable because He is omniscient. He never changes, because the new that might dispose Him to change never comes. But I am not omniscient, and it does not become me to act as if I were so. I know not what a day may bring forth, and my duty accordingly is, to believe that good may come in answer to prayer in the measure in which I wisely

seek it. With me, the ground of action is not knowledge of the future, but ignorance of it. I know not what the sunshine or the rain of the next season may be, but my duty to-day is to sow, and the law is that as I sow so I shall reap. So in spiritual things—I know not the future, but I have reason to expect that it will be stored with good in the measure in which I seek that it may be so, and especially in the measure in which I beseech the Father of all Goodness to 'work in me both to will and 'to do, of His good pleasure.'

It is a giddy place that region of fore-knowledge and decrees. The air is thin. Mortals are never well there. They are safer in a region much lower down. I have said that I have a sphere in which I can use natural law so that good shall come of it. By an act of my will, giving command to my muscular skill and force, I can wrest a dagger from the hand of an assassin, or can save a drowning man from his apparent doom. The things of this sort which I can do are numberless; and am I thus free to act in my relation to these laws, and has the Almighty no freedom to act in His relation to them? Has He so constituted this great system that it has become His tomb, in which He sleeps the sleep of death, while man lays his living hand upon law everywhere, and makes it do his bidding? The instinct of man through all lands and all time is on the side of prayer, and that instinct cannot be a falsehood—it must embody a truth. The Bible from the beginning to the end is on the same side. If it be so that the Deity never listens to our prayer, though we ourselves through a subtle and unconscious illusion are the better for praying, then the Christian has to remember that the teaching of the sacred

writers, and of Christ Himself on this subject, is such as must be utterly fatal to their authority. To suppose that they did not detect this illusion must be to proclaim them weak and incompetent as religious guides. On the other hand, to suppose that they became aware of this self-deception which men were everywhere practising upon themselves, only to encourage them and strengthen them in their error, would be to condemn them with a heavier anathema. But the Christian is not obliged to cede either point in this alternative. The Bible assures us that God answers prayer, and our natural feeling and our most enlightened reason, alike bid us welcome this assurance as worthy of all acceptation. Hence in ecclesiastical history this doctrine gets prominence, and retains it, in defiance of much which might seem to say that it is really too pure to survive in such an atmosphere. Is it not strange that a truth which makes holiness in this life indispensable to the hope of happiness in the next, should have place and power assigned to it from century to century by men who for the greater part have not been themselves holy? It is true they have corrupted the doctrine. But that it should live on in almost any form in such keeping is not a little significant. They have created the great fiction they call the Church—that is, they have made a corporate order of ministers to be the Church, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to be their gift, to be dispensed by them through certain prescribed forms. Still, as in the case of the Atonement, there is the doctrine, in the form which their system and policy have made it expedient should be given to it. We might have thought that the views of sin and its consequences implied in the doctrine

of the Atonement would have disposed unspiritual men to frown upon it: and in like manner we might have supposed that the doctrine concerning the grace of the Holy Spirit, condemning the unholy, and necessitating the contrary, as it seems to do, would for the same reasons have been especially unacceptable.

But there were causes to prevent such men from acting on such repugnances. Not only are those doctrines written as with a sunbeam in Holy Writ, but human nature everywhere proclaims that it hath need of them, and must have them. And the course taken accordingly has been, to lay hold on this provided means of pardon and grace, as upon a sort of spiritual treasury, designed for priestly hands, and to be administered by their sole authority as priests, and after their special manner. No doubt, they do very commonly deprive these doctrines of the vital elements proper to them, leading their votaries to think that they are pardoned when they are not, and that they are regenerated when they are not. But still the doctrines in some sense survive. The worshippers have the idea or persuasion of being pardoned through an atonement, and of being regenerated through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Not only is the idea of atonement preserved, it is clothed in all the pomp and mystery of the mass. Not only is the grace of the Holy Spirit the theme of the preacher, it is shadowed forth by many elaborate symbols. Why is this? Because the whole priesthood know, and have known from the beginning, that doctrines to this effect are affirmed to be in Holy Scripture, that the religious instincts of the people prompt them to cling to such ideas, and so, in place of attempting to resist the wave, they float upon it,

and endeavour so to guide it that it shall serve their purposes. Of course, spiritual men have had other motives for doing as they have done: but must not the power of revealed truth be great to exercise such influence over the reluctant course of the unspiritual? Disastrous, however, as the sacerdotal theory has been in relation to this doctrine, we only need glance at the ancient liturgies and hymns of the Church to see how it breaks forth, ever and anon, like the sun sending its rays through a cloudy sky.

We speak of the influence of the Holy Spirit as belonging to the region of the supernatural, but human action in its most familiar forms includes so much resembling it that to not a few minds scarcely any fact seems to be more reasonable. Let it be said that the world is a system of laws, and that man is left to acquit himself intelligently in relation to them, or take the consequences. Still, there is so much flexibility in those laws under the action of human intelligence, as should certainly prevent our saying at once that the doctrine of the Gospel concerning the influence of the Holy Spirit is not to be deemed credible.

In the scheme of providence, under any view of it, it is not more clear that there is a sphere of action pertaining to man, than that there is a higher sphere of action pertaining to God. It is not the manner of the Divine Being to do for man what man may do for himself. But the connexions are innumerable in which what is possible to be done by man will be fruitless if not joined with something not possible to be done by him,—with something that must be done by a higher power. Man can plough the ground and sow the seed, but he cannot give

to the seed the mysterious quickening power which befits a single seed to become some thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold: nor can he give to the atmosphere those alternations of moisture and warmth without which all that has preceded must be in vain. Everywhere man is a worker together with God. Up to a certain line the action of man is free and intelligent, but a point comes where a power which the Divine hand only can exercise must come into play, or he labours in vain, and spends his strength for naught. He is environed with mysterious influences, but he has the most steady faith in the reality of those influences, and in the regularity of their action. The husbandman casts his seed into the ground, and is sure that it will spring up, though 'he knoweth 'not how.' 'Be patient therefore, brethren. Behold, 'the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the 'earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the 'early and latter rain.'* In this world, then, we have a sphere of the supernatural which belongs to man, and a higher sphere of it which belongs to God. It is in vain to endeavour to separate between these; the two go together, and are so intimately blended that we cannot fix upon the line where they may be put asunder. Even this power of action from ourselves, of which we are so conscious, is rooted in mystery, and the results of such action are everywhere allied with the mysterious.

Now, if it be thus in the world of matter, is it not likely to be thus in the world of mind? and if human action in this higher region may be supplemented in any

* James v. 7.

way by the Divine, who is to limit the force or extent of this higher influence? If God really so works *about* us in the scheme of providence, everywhere connecting the power special to Himself with the power possible to us, why must it be difficult to suppose that He works *within* us—within us 'both to will and to do of His own 'good pleasure?' The natural world does not serve its purpose apart from action which is clearly that of the Creator—not ours; and who can imagine the moral world, with its far more subtle influences, to be what it is without His present and regulating skill?

But whatever human speculation may be on this subject in other respects, nothing can be more manifest, from our present experience, than the hopelessness of our moral condition, if we are not to expect help from above ourselves in our endeavours to realise the perfection and happiness proper to our nature. Man has ever been conscious of a power to see the good greatly surpassing his power to conform himself to it. Even heathen men have deplored it as a dread mystery of our present state that we should be able to see the better, and be so often constrained by forbidden appetite or passion to choose the worse. Our nature, in this view, has been a dual nature, made up of good and bad tendencies, and the history of each man has been a war between these opposites—a war in which the evil is too often the victor, and is never more than partially vanquished. He resolves and sins, and resolves and sins again, exclaiming after each miserable failure, with an ever-deepening sense of wretchedness—Is it ever to be thus? Or with Paul, 'Oh, wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from 'the body of this death?' To this cry of agony, what

is called natural religion gives no answer. It gives us no hope of the needed help in this world, and it is silent as to the possibility of any such help in any other world. If we can ever need it, we need it now, but it does not come; and the presumption seems to be that it will never come. If our aspirations are true and good anywhere, it is here: and are we to suppose that even here we have been left to desire in vain, and to pray in vain? Our whole moral nature seems to rise up against such a supposition, and to answer, no! We are conscious that our desire here is no craving of mere selfishness, but such as must be approved by Him who has made us capable of cherishing it, and surely He will be found to be in sympathy with breathings which must have come from Himself.

It may be true that there are persons, and not a few, who evince no such aspirations, have no such sympathies. They are intent on material enjoyments, and all they covet is the possession of larger means for gratification in that form. The most beautiful and touching presentations of spiritual things may come before them, and they remain unmoved, or, if moved at all, are moved by mere inquietude or disgust. Generally, their hearts in relation to such things seem not to be of flesh, but of wood or stone. Spiritual persons look on them with amazement and pity. The slightest access to sensuous pleasure fills them with excitement; while, if invited to the contemplation of things of a higher order, they suddenly become grave, look at you with surprise, their only thought being how they may best escape from topics so little attractive, so unwelcome.

Nor is it the low and uncultured only who betray this

condition of mind. You find it nowhere more conspicuous than in the circles of wealth and fashion, among minds characterised by the highest artistic refinement. We might have supposed that the susceptibility of fascination by the graceful and the lofty in the material forms of such qualities, would have prepared minds of that order for ascending a step higher, and for becoming especially enamoured of such things when they take the form of the celestial—the Divine. But it is not always so. It is too commonly otherwise. As men of science often halt in second causes, and fail to ascend through them to the first cause, so our men of taste, whose responsive feelings are moved to their depths by fine sculpture, painting, poetry, or music, rest in such pleasures, and never rise into sympathy with the lovely and wonderful in their highest moral and spiritual developments. Apart from experience, we should have said, these are the persons who will be found nearest the kingdom of heaven. They have received the most, and from them the most may reasonably be expected. But we know what Christ has said concerning the rich in this world, and the wise in this world, in relation to His kingdom ; and we know the sad confirmations of those sayings which abound through all history. The cross has brought enough of the refinement and intelligence of the race into consecration to itself, to show that there is no real want of geniality between it and such conditions of human nature. But enough remains to warrant the conclusion that it is not such teaching as the wealthy, the artistic, or the scientific never fail to realise that should be expected to raise human spirits into commerce with the unseen and eternal. Such elevation of soul

does not come from natural, nor from simply moral causes.

To learn how it is that some natures differ so much in this respect from others, we must ascend above the natural to the supernatural. We see clearly that in this connexion those who should be first are not first, and that those who should be last are not last. Concerning the influence which must be the source of this distinction, a voice from beyond the visible has said that it is like the wind, 'thou canst not tell whence it cometh, 'nor whither it goeth.' The people whom we are ever inclined to deem fortunate on account of their wealth or culture, too commonly become wedded to sense by the enjoyments of that nature at their command, or intoxicated by their feeling of superiority, while the more natural susceptibilities of the lowly and unlettered have been open to influences which have enlightened, elevated, and saved them.

We may rest assured that there are more moral and spiritual lessons to come out of the history of things in this world than we at present dream about; and the hollowness of all artificial distinctions which are not allied with the distinction of being led by the Spirit of God is one of them. The Almighty does not need our greatness to eke out His greatness; and He will make us all understand that in the end, to our joy or sorrow.

We see then that the separation of men into two classes —the spiritual and not spiritual, that is the religious and not religious—cannot be traced to the influence of natural culture. That culture is sometimes connected with sincere piety, more commonly it is not so—palpably not so. The more we examine the distinction we thus see between men, the more we shall feel obliged to trace

its existence to supernatural influence. Men should strive to become holy, but whatever our own sense of responsibility may realise in that direction, the great change will not come if we are left to strive alone. The heart of stone does not become a heart of flesh by simply natural means. Facts from all history tend to teach us this truth.

But it is time we should look beyond the ascertained need of humanity, and beyond these various considerations tending to show it to be reasonable to suppose that the received doctrine concerning the office of the Holy Spirit is credible, to the direct testimony of scripture on this subject. For, after all, this is the oracle that must decide the question. What saith the scriptures? And if language be accepted in any case as a certain vehicle of thought, the language of Jesus Christ, and of His disciples, must be accepted as setting forth this doctrine. In many scriptures it is God who is said to enlighten, to purify, and to save the souls of men. In others this is said in general language to be the work of the Spirit of God. But in many passages the Holy Ghost is spoken of in words which express or imply personality, denoting the presence of intelligence, will, and Divine perfection. Passages of the latter description, with which we have here most to do, are more observable, as might have been expected, in the New Testament than in the Old. But in all these instances the doctrine that men become holy, not simply by personal effort, but by Divine help, is very clear.

The solace administered by our Lord to His disciples when preparing them for His departure, was the promise of the Holy Spirit, who would come upon them in a new

and special manner, when He should Himself be no more with them. It was natural that this should be the juncture in which He would speak concerning the Holy Spirit in very explicit terms. Here are some of His words. 'I will pray the Father, and HE shall give you 'another Comforter, that HE may abide with you for 'ever; even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot 'receive, because it seeth it not, neither knoweth it; but 'ye know it, for it abideth with you, and shall be in 'you.'* 'The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which the 'Father will send in my name, HE shall teach you all 'things, and shall bring to your remembrance all that 'I have said unto you.'† 'When the Comforter is 'come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, 'the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, 'HE shall testify of me.'‡ 'Except I depart, the Com-'forter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will 'send HIM unto you. And when HE is come, HE shall 'convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of 'judgment.' 'When HE, the Spirit of Truth, is come, HE 'will guide you into all the truth, for HE will not speak 'from HIMSELF; but whatever things HE shall hear, HE 'will speak, and HE will declare to you things to come. 'HE will glorify me, for HE will receive of mine, and 'will declare it unto you.'§

The word Πνεῦμα, rendered spirit in the above passages, is in the neuter gender, and pronouns of that gender are sometimes used to agree with it, but the pronouns, as indicated above, become personal and masculine where anything is said to be *done* by the spirit implying

* John xiv. 16, 17.
† Ibid. xiv. 26.
‡ Ibid. xv. 26.
§ John xvi. 7–14.

personality. When the Spirit is said to *speak*, to *teach*, to *guide*, to *testify*, to *convince of sin*, HE is said to do it. It is said to be done by HIM, by HIMSELF. Surely, if the Holy Ghost may be so described, the Holy Ghost must be a person, as truly as the Father is a person, and as the Son is a person. Before this time, many expressions of our Lord had been such as to teach this truth, either directly or by implication: but after the day of Pentecost the language of His disciples is everywhere in accordance with His own language as above cited. It is the Holy Ghost which says to Philip, 'Go forwards, and join 'that chariot;' it is the Holy Ghost who says to the Christians at Antioch, 'Separate to ME Barnabas and 'Saul for the work whereunto *I* have called them.'* It is the Holy Ghost who says to Peter, 'Arise, therefore, 'and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: 'for I have sent them.'† It is not denied that there are instances in which the word spirit is used to denote abstract power or influence, but there are many texts, of which the above are only samples, that do not admit of being so interpreted. Poets, indeed, often raise the impersonal into the personal, but only madmen ever do so in sober prose.

The forms in which this doctrine of the regeneration of the human spirit by redeeming grace comes before us in scripture are various. Sometimes it is in direct statement, as in our Lord's words, 'Verily, verily, I 'say unto you, except a man be born of water and of 'the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which 'is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say

* Acts xiii. 2. † Ibid. x. 20.

'unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth 'where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, 'but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, 'so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.'* The prayers of good men everywhere imply their consciousness of dependence on this grace, if they are to maintain their spiritual conflict in this life, and to rise above the storm and trial of the present to the rest and perfection of the future.

So the Psalmist prays, 'Create in me a clean heart, 'O God, and renew a right spirit within me.'† 'Search 'me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my 'thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, 'and lead me in the way everlasting.'‡ Writing to the Church at Ephesus, Paul says, 'For this cause I bow 'my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus 'Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and on 'earth is named, that He would grant you, according 'to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with 'might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may 'dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted 'and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with 'all saints what is the breadth and depth, and length 'and height, and to know the love of Christ that passeth 'knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness 'of God.'§ Many of the promises of scripture relate to this subject. 'Repent,' said Peter, 'and be baptized 'everyone of you in the name of the Jesus Christ, for 'the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gifts of 'the Holy Ghost.'‖ These texts are samples of the

* John iii. 5–8. † Psalm xli. ‡ Ibid. cxxxix. 23, 24.
§ Ephes. iii. 14–20. ‖ Acts ii. 38.

language on this subject running through the New Testament. The student of this portion of Holy Writ, bearing in mind the words of our Lord as to the sense in which the expressions, 'the Spirit of God,' and the 'Holy Spirit,' are to be understood, finds the doctrine concerning the influences of the Holy Ghost reiterated through the history of the early Church, and through all the Epistles. All that is Christian in Christians is affirmed to be the fruit of His indwelling power. To secure this end, the Spirit is said to make believers His Temple. He dwells in them, that He may be to them as their light, and purity, and comfort, and hope. What the Holy Spirit does in them is the end contemplated in all that Christ has done for them, and in all that the Father has done through Him. 'This is the will of 'God'—His ultimate desire and purpose—'even your 'sanctification.'* We are pardoned and justified that we might be regenerated, and perfected in the Divine image.

Exception is sometimes taken to this doctrine on opposite grounds. According to one class of objectors, its tendency is to dispose men to indolence. According to another class, its natural issue is in presumption and fanaticism. No doubt, it may be abused in both those directions. But it is not difficult to distinguish between the use and the abuse.

It is confessed that the regeneration of the soul must come from a power above itself. The human spirit is a dwelling of which a strong man armed has possession, and from the strength of his arm he can keep his goods in peace. If he be dislodged, it must be by the coming in of another from without—of another 'stronger

* 1 Thess. iv. 3.

'than he.'* But though the native force left to the soul is not equal to the force of this intruder and usurper, it is a reality, and forms a basis of responsibility. When men are exhorted to work out their own salvation, it is not intended that they should first save themselves, and then come to the Holy Spirit that He may save them. They are to remember that the voice which says, 'Work out your own salvation,' is the same which says, 'For it is God that worketh in you to will and to 'do of His good pleasure.'† When a responsible nature has once come into bondage to sin, the power which is strongest within it will of course rule, and will continue to rule so long as the nature so subdued shall be left to its own means of deliverance. Once sold under sin, all hope from within is gone — gone for ever. But the human soul is not left to its own means of deliverance. It may call for help, and there is One ready to listen to its cry. It may invoke deliverance from an arm stronger than its own, stronger than the arm by which it has been vanquished, and we are assured that looking in that direction for help it will not look in vain. 'If ye 'being evil,' says the All-beneficent One, 'know how to 'give good gifts unto your children, how much more 'shall your Heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to 'them that ask Him.—Ask that ye may receive, seek 'that ye may find, knock that the door may be opened; 'for everyone that asketh receiveth, and everyone that 'seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh the door shall be 'opened.'‡ Can a doctrine allied with such conceptions, and such language, be justly described as tending to lull

* Luke xi. 21–26. † Philip. ii. 12, 13.
‡ Matt. vii. 7–11; Luke xi. 9–13.

men into religious apathy? Is not its tendency rather to summon the soul into religious action by proclaiming despair and apathy as without excuse?

Men may be *thoughtful* concerning their religious interests in place of being thoughtless. Their power to think on such matters is as real as their power to think at all. They have the faculty; inclination to exercise it is all that is wanting. They might interrogate their souls as to the capacities of which they are possessed; as to the design of the Creator in creating them as they are; as to what is probably awaiting them beyond the present life; or as to the fitness they have, or have not, for finding a home—a heaven, in a world where there is no farm, no merchandise, no landholding, no marrying or giving in marriage. A man may read a portion of his Bible every day, as readily as he may read a portion of his newspaper every day. He may also ponder over what he reads in the one case as well as in the other. He is wont to mark certain items in his newspaper, as bearing on his probable gains and losses; and, as is very natural, he is wont to task his powers of calculation and foresight according to the exigency. But might he not also mark the bearing of the lessons that come up in the daily reading of his Bible, and look at them also in what they indicate as to his probable gain or loss hereafter, in comparison with which the fluctuations of the present must be but as the dust of the balance? This power to reckon, to look before and after, man has, not that it should be restricted to his ledger or to his broad acres, but that it should look onwards to the day when another book will be opened, and another audit must be met. Can men who

live in the neglect of these duties towards themselves have any right to complain if it should be found at last that their Maker has left them to be filled with the fruit of their own ways?

Men may not only be thoughtful in regard to their religious interests in place of being thoughtless, they may be *active* in place of being apathetic, *striving* in place of being inert. Men in general know, that there is a sort of reading, of companionship, and of amusement, the effect of which upon them is to preclude religious thought and feeling by completely occupying the mind with quite other influences. They know equally well, that their reading, their associations, and their modes of employing their leisure, might be of a sort to awaken and strengthen devout reflexion and aspiration. Surely the man who knows this—knows it quite well, might strive to avoid the influences which experience assures him are so perilous, and might resolve to place himself under those which carry such different and better tendencies along with them. It may be that to do this would require some soberness of thought, some steadiness of purpose, and some resoluteness of effort. But it is a great law in the providence of this world that men shall not be able to realise any great good except by such means. It is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich. Men who become wise are men who have sought wisdom as hidden treasure, holding the price thereof above rubies. Men, too, who would govern others, have had first to acquire skill in the most difficult of all kind of government—the government of themselves. From the lips which promised the Holy Spirit to men came the exhortation, 'Strive, agonise,

'to enter in at the straight gate, for many there be who 'shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'* We even hear Him say, 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth 'violence, and the violent take it by force.'† His voice is constantly summoning men to thoughtfulness, to watchfulness and effort. Divine help is promised, not to supersede such action, but to stimulate it. According to our Lord's teaching, to neglect such action is to be lost, to abound in it is to be saved. Help is to come where there is the cry for help.

Men may not only strive in the sense now explained, they may go much further—they may *worship* and *pray*. Religious people often give an air of mystery to things which in themselves are not mysterious. It is so with worship and prayer. The common idea is, that these are exercises to which the converted and really devout are alone competent. But who can say with certainty where the line is which separates between the converted and the unconverted, the devout and the not devout? What is said may be in a sense true, but worship and prayer are acts that should be looked at more largely.

What do we mean by *worship*? Simply giving honour to whom honour is due. To all men of eminent worth we render homage—a kind of worship. Patriots, philanthropists, martyrs—the reverence and affection with which we regard the memory of such men are the worship we render to them. In so far as they were great and good men, they remind us of the Infinitely great and good, and to worship God, is to be in relation to His greatness and goodness, what we confess we

* Luke xiii. 24. † Matt. xii. 11.

ought to be, and what we are conscious of being, in relation to those qualities in men. There is no mystery in this. Nothing should seem to us more simply and obviously reasonable and natural, than the worship of God in this view of it. True it is, that this worship in the higher and more spiritual forms of it is possible only to spiritual men. But through all the possible grades of homage that man renders to his Maker there is an element of worship. The light within may be feeble, but if the feeling proper to it goes along with it, in that feeling there is worship. It gives honour, in its measure, where honour is due.

Worshipping assemblies are ordinarily composed of persons who are regarded as being spiritual persons—really Christian, and of persons who are not. But the idea that the persons not recognised as spiritual persons are present merely to be instructed, and not to worship, is an idea as unwarranted as it is mischievous. Such person can reverence human greatness where they see it, and have a responsive feeling for unselfish excellence where they see it. Is it to be supposed that the Divine greatness is the only greatness they cannot reverence, and that the Divine goodness is the only goodness towards which they cannot yield any fitting emotion? If we hope to see man pass from small things to greater, from a limited and defective worship to that which shall be larger and spiritual, we must teach them accordingly. Every man who aims to worship God according to his light and power, may hope for greater light and greater power. So the breath of the Divine Spirit may pass over the smoking flax, and raise it to a flame. The want of man is not the want of new faculties

or new susceptibilities, but that the faculties and susceptibilities he has may be directed towards their right objects in right proportions. Every step possible to man in this direction is a sign that should be encouraged, and that will not be overlooked by Him who sees the heart, and who would not that men should perish. The effort may come from a bruised reed, but we have to do with One who has bound up many such, and made them whole. The Spirit of God broods over the embryos of things—nurtures life from its lowest forms.

So with prayer. Some men insist, not only that prayer must be the prayer of faith, but that the faith must be, not of this description or that, but of a very precise and special order. Only as we have reason to suppose that a man possesses this faith have we warrant to urge him to pray. But such teaching is neither rational nor scriptural. These metaphysical distinctions concerning the nature of faith do not admit of easy settlement. Saving faith is known by its fruits, and in no other way. Hence to say that a man should not be urged to pray until you are sure that he has saving faith, is in effect to say that you should wait until he is regenerated before you urge him to seek the grace that can alone regenerate him.

If we want light, we seek it wherever we can find it. If our neighbour has it, and can dispense it to us, we ask him to do so. And what can be more reasonable and natural than that such a man should be urged to go with his sense of need to God, and to ask light from the Father of lights? Is it not written, 'If any man lack 'wisdom, let him ask of God!' Of course he must ask in faith; but if he be wholly without faith, it is not easy

to see why he should ask at all. We demand warrant from those who interpose here, and insist on a metaphysical settlement of the question as to what is or is not saving faith before the man is allowed to offer his intended prayer. They have no such warrant. They are presumptuous intruders, and should be dealt with as such. Here are the words of Peter addressed to Simon Magus. 'Pray God if perhaps the thought of thine 'heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou 'art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of ini-'quity.'* The enormity of this man's sin is the circumstance which prompts the apostle to bid him pray—pray for forgiveness. The more terrible the condemnation to which the offender has exposed himself, the stranger it would seem is the reason for exhorting him to pray for pardon. Every man may pray. It is the duty of every man to pray. The man who does not pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit has no right to complain if that gift be not conferred upon him; and the man who does really pray for that gift shall not pray in vain. Here again, the promised grace of the Holy Spirit is a motive to action, not an excuse for neglecting it.

So it is with the spiritual life of the Christian to the end. That life consists in the gradual transformation of our nature from the condition to which sin has reduced it, into the Divine image:—in being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and in putting on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.† We might have supposed that the Holy Spirit coming into the soul, as it does in conversion,

* Acts viii. 22, 23. † Ephes. iv. 23, 24.

every resistance to such an agent must be feeble, and that the change contemplated would be accomplished immediately. But another course has commended itself to Divine wisdom.

Men are to pass from the state in which the Gospel finds them, into the state in which it will perfect them, by a life of experiences which shall school them into a knowledge of good and evil as nothing else could. They have to pass through a travail of soul into the higher state of being awaiting them; and in all their conflict, in which they are to prevail finally, but do not always prevail, they are ever to bear in mind the exhortation, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 'for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to 'do of his good pleasure.' To be saved is to be saved from sin, and there must be conflict until we are cleansed from the last taint of that malady. The ordinances of the sanctuary, Christian fellowship, the duties and trials of life—everything incident to our earthly pilgrimage, is to minister in its own way to the discipline which is to give us meetness for 'the inheritance of the saints in 'light.' Through all these processes the Holy Spirit is said to be with us, as our instructor, purifier, and comforter, ever giving us the hope and strength we need, that we may finally conquer. And through every stage of this warfare it behoves us to see that we do not 'resist,' or 'quench,' or 'grieve' the Spirit of God, by whom we are said to be sealed as His own until the day of redemption.

All that we can do in aid of this great transformation it is imperative upon us to attempt. We are to watch, and strive, and pray, and as our patience in well-doing

shall be, so shall be the grace coming upon us, until it has made us more than conquerors. The characteristics of life are warmth, action, and growth, and all are here. Our souls are our vineyard, for the well-keeping of which we are responsible to Him from whom we hold them; and his grace is as the sun and rain, and the secret and mysterious processes of nature, which ensure to the husbandman that as he sows so shall he reap. Can any order of things be imagined less likely to encourage sloth, or better adapted to secure hopeful and steady effort?

But let it not be supposed that by growth we mean an increase of mere passionateness. The effect of time may be to soften and mellow passion. With less apparent feeling, however, there may be more wisdom, more self-distrust, more humility, more candour and forbearance, deeper principle, less selfishness, and altogether a more justly balanced and fully developed manhood. Religion in some minds comes in the way of perceptible conversion. It is not an influence that has been in them from childhood, and which has made them what they are by very slow degrees, but it has produced a change that can be marked. In such cases, the first idea of religion often is, that it consists, begins, and ends, in strong feeling towards God as revealed in Christ. But if the mind be a sound one, it soon comes to learn that religion has not only a first table but a second; that it means bringing the soul into harmony with all duty to the created, along with duty to the Creator, and that happiness is to flow from being right in relation to God's creatures, as truly as from being right in relation to God Himself.

Were this newly awakened spirit and God the only existences, then this absolute surrender of the soul to a seraphic contemplation of the Divine perfections might embrace everything possible to religion and blessedness. But the soul is not thus alone. It is part of a universe of being which God loves and cares for; and which this soul must love and care for, if its religion is to be a reflection of the Divine nature. There are moments, however, in the experience of some minds, in which they feel that the idea of any existence apart from their own is a distraction and an annoyance, and they flatter themselves that seasons in which they are most forgetful of all creature natures are their holiest. They do not suspect the presence of the subtle vein of selfishness that may underlie this seeming self-consecration. What would be the condition of the other beings of the universe if God were inclined to be thus forgetful of them? Religious life is the result of conformity to a well-balanced scheme of duties. It is not a visionary, but a reasonable service. It is not mere feeling, it is that and the action to which that should lead. Time and experience are sure to bring a knowledge of these things to well-constituted natures.

We see then how it is that the doctrine of Divine influence is made to harmonise with a just sense of human responsibility, and how it tends to keep the feeling of responsibility in wholesome action, in place of allowing it to sink into indifference. But while some persons fail to look to the Holy Spirit for the aid they should seek from him, others attribute his agency to effects which have manifestly come from ill-regulated tendencies in their own mind. The Rationalist and the Mystic have this

in common, that they confide in their inner light so far as to be guided but little, if at all, by the written wisdom of the Bible. But while the light of the Rationalist consists in his purely natural reason, that of the Mystic consists in a supposed spiritual light which is regarded as having come to him purely by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Both affect an independence of the written word, and on grounds not widely different.

From all that we know concerning the human spirit, it would be marvellous if illusion as seen in the case of the Mystic were unknown to it. We are none of us in a strictly sound state of mind. We have all our intellectual as well as our moral aberrations. Differences of capacity, of temperament, of circumstances, and of education, bring with them differences of susceptibility, so that our liabilities to err are as varied as are the apparent accidents of our existence. Some minds are disposed to err on the side of a cold and hard rationality; while others are inclined to the speculative, the imaginative, the sentimental, and find pleasure in surrendering themselves to the influence of fancies and dreams. We often speak of persons as subject to monomania, and it sometimes happens that the one subject on which their wonted intelligence forsakes them is religion. On all other subjects they can reason with great exactness. Not so on this subject. Nor is sincere piety, any more than strong natural intelligence, a sufficient safeguard in all cases against weakness in the form under consideration. Beyond all this, we should perhaps admit that the human mind would seem to be possessed in some men, and still more in women, of a susceptibility, or of a sort of spiritual faculty, which cannot be

explained by our ordinary laws of thought or rules of judgment. That we often find ourselves on the edge of mystery in this region should occasion no surprise. Nor should we speak otherwise than cautiously as to the degrees in which moral infirmity may have conduced to foolish or mischievous conceptions in this form. But we know that vanity thirsts for distinction, that ambition pants for ascendency, and whether those ends be gained by qualities inherent in the mind, or by power supposed to have been specially imparted to it, matters not—the distinction or ascendency is gained, and the feelings naturally allied with vanity or ambition are all gratified. In some instances, as in the case of Madame Krudner, the vanity has been palpable enough; in others, it has been more disguised both from the subject of it and from observers; and the cases are not few in which the deep sincerity of persons of this class is not to be suspected.

In the better class of Mystics, it is not difficult to see that a certain feeling of impatience with the existing order of things, has done much to prepare the way for their acceptance of the shorter road to their object which mysticism never fails to promise. To minds of an ardent temperament, it is a sore trial to be told that they must live on to the end of life, and die, before they can hope to be admitted to the vision of the Almighty. The impatient spirit is heard to ask, why so long deferred? Why not sooner? Why not now? So minds of this temper must endeavour to forget earth, even while they are on it, and rise at once to heaven—must forget created natures, even while surrounded by them, that even now, by a soaring abstraction of soul,

they may become lost in the Creator. You may counsel such persons to remember that this world is God's world after all, and may admonish them that this attempt to escape from the cost of relative duty under the plea of seeking Divine raptures in the regions of imagination, may be not so much the evidence of enlightened piety as of an unconscious selfishness—but such minds will be found to have their answer. You dwell in darkness; how is it to be expected that *you* should know how to teach the child of light?

The world!—they will say, who can hope to see it other than it is by the use of any of the means within your power? Has it not rolled on, presenting the same chaos in the sight of heaven from century to century after all that existing appliances could do to help it? No!—not by such means will the great change come. Prophecy must mean more than you suppose. Christ must re-appear. He must do it all. His visible reign, His millennial day, must be at hand. Then, and not till then, will there be change for the better.

It is only too manifest that we have many among us who have been thus beguiled; not a few, as the consequence, becoming about as useless as the Author of evil could wish them to be. We repeat, God's image in the soul will never prompt us to forget God's creatures. And to be impatient of God's patience in governing the world, may be presumptuous, selfish—a sin, but it can be no real element of piety.

Religion, in all grades of it, must be 'a reasonable 'service.' The design of the influence of the Holy Spirit on human intelligence is to make the reason of man more reasonable; and to plead that influence in

favour of any course of life not sanctioned by a reasonable interpretation of the entire word of God, may bear any name that men shall choose to give it, but it must present the abuse of the Scriptural doctrine concerning the office of the Holy Ghost, and not the true use of it. From the neglect of this simple principle, the religiousness of some minds has degenerated into an idle luxuriating habit of soul on the one hand, or has become a fierce and disastrous fanaticism on the other, the natural disorder of the mind becoming tenfold worse, as the victim of the delusion has been able to persuade himself that to be thus is to be eminently religious.

Mysticism has a right to be offended with the barren orthodoxy, and the empty formalism, to which it is opposed, and from which it has been so potent a reaction. But it is not itself a truth because opposed to an error. The world is full of things which are mistaken for truths because they happen to be antagonist to things which are not true. George Fox was the natural antithesis to Archbishop Laud. But while Anglicanism in the hands of Laud put an end to all liberty; Quakerism in the hands of Fox, if carried out, must have put an end to all order. For if one man may claim to be infallible because persuaded that he is led by the Spirit, why not another, who, while of a contrary mind, is equally persuaded that he too has been so led? Between these rival authorities, who is to be umpire? This dead-lock necessitates the sort of appeal to the written word which must be fatal to the theory of Fox and to that of his followers. Laud and Fox both had their truth, and the thing needed was, a wiser combination of

the truth possessed by both, than either was capable of presenting to us.

It is with our feelings as it is with our principles—we must bring them to the authority of Scripture if we would know the truth that is in them. There are certain moral principles natural to the mind which the Scriptures themselves suppose to be existing within us, and to the verdict of which the teaching of revelation itself must not be opposed. But when we pass beyond the natural sentiments concerning true and false, and right and wrong, which lie at the basis of all human responsibility, to those more spiritual apprehensions and aspirations which we regard as especially religious and Christian, we have then to look carefully to what 'is 'written.' And in so doing devout minds have rarely fallen into material error. They have sought Divine help by prayer, that help has been vouchsafed, and the result has been a matter of grateful and happy consciousness to themselves, and an evidence to others as to the sincerity of their pretensions as professed believers in Jesus Christ.

Here then is our place of rest. We have seen what the capacities of the human spirit are, and what its true end must be supposed to be; and we have seen also what the moral derangement is by which this end has been frustrated. It is clear that such teaching as the soul needs does not come to man by the light of nature, so that to look for the help it needs from purely natural sources must be to look in vain. But here is a book claiming to be the voice of God speaking to this deep want in man. It is the most ancient of all books. It has claims to a supernatural origin possessed by no

other book. It has not wholly escaped injury in passing through so many centuries, but its great substance and purpose are sufficiently manifest, and become the more so the more it is examined. If the remote past is to be known to us at all, then the pictures of that past presented in the pages of this book must be accepted. Men are thus shut up to faith in this volume or to self-condemnation. As men believe in Alexander and in Cæsar, so, on the same principles, are they bound to believe in Isaiah and in Jesus Christ.

This oracle speaks with authority concerning great questions on which reason cannot so speak. It reveals, once and for ever, the perfections of the Supreme Being, and the eternal law of right. It declares forgiveness of sin to be possible, and shows how it may be obtained. It declares man's restoration to the Divine image to be possible, and shows how that great change may become ours. It draws aside the veil which conceals the future, and sets forth the grounds on which the retributions of that future will be administered to the evil and the good. Men who truly receive the doctrine of Scripture concerning redemption by Jesus Christ, and the renewal of the human spirit by the power of the Holy Ghost, attain to a peace and purity sufficient to witness within themselves that they have not been lured by fables, but that they have laid hold on Divine truth, and on the Divine strength, having within them the beginnings of all the greatness and goodness which, perfected hereafter, will give them the heaven said to be there awaiting them. This life is an unfinished story, but there the darkness of the present will become light; and sin, that has so dwarfed, deformed, and defiled us here, will be

among the former things that shall have passed away for ever—here is solid rock. On this stable basis man can rear his structure of hope, satisfied that all has been done for him that moral certainty can be reasonably expected to do.

In too large a portion of our current theology, neither the Atonement made by Christ, nor the work of the Holy Spirit, hold the place which the Scriptures assign to them. In some quarters, it is not enough that attempts should be made to secure that the doctrine of the Incarnation shall be a more fertile truth than it has been commonly in the systems of evangelical divines. Instead of being so presented, in this higher view of it, as to give a deeper significance to the Atonement, it comes largely, if not entirely, into the place of that doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Divine nature in Christ, is retained, but it is that the human beauty of the Saviour's character may become the great reconciling and assimilating power—the Gospel. Carefully analysed, this kind of orthodoxy leaves nothing as religion, which may not be found in the more serious forms of Unitarianism. It rests in homage rendered to the human character, and the human example of Christ, without recognising, in Paul's manner, the necessity of expiation, or the necessity of the illuminating and renovating power of the Divine Spirit. Much is said concerning the duty of following the steps of Our Lord, and of emulating his example of self-sacrifice to the will of God; but little as to the means by which the guilt resulting from past failures in this respect may be removed, and quite as little concerning that aid of the Spirit of God without which our striving after such conformity

in the future is not likely to be more successful than our efforts in the past.

For any practical purpose, the orthodox tenets of this class of thinkers might all be dispensed with. Suppose a man to appear among us made perfect by God, and so presented as to be to us the image of God, in this man such persons would possess all that now seems to constitute their Gospel. Lofty ideas are cherished by speculators of this class as to man's power of intelligence and of moral motive. Every sort of appeal is made to this supposed self-regulating and self-elevating force regarded as in our nature. But little is said as to the need of looking above all this to Him whose office it is to give light and order to the chaos of the soul, and to impart to it an influence much more potent than any force we can ourselves originate.

No doubt, all that men *may* themselves do in this direction they should do, and there is a sort of teaching that is wanting in wisdom and fidelity on this point. But in attempting to counteract defective instruction in this form, it behoves us to guard against the opposite error. In rebuking those who expect too little from the spirit of man, it becomes us to be careful that we are not ourselves found expecting too little from the Spirit of God. Your self-guided and self-governed man is mostly a cold and haughty being, not much burthened with charity towards other men, and sharing little in the spirit of the Hebrew who prayed, 'Hold thou me up in thy goings, that 'my footsteps slip not.' To expect little from God is to live far from him. To expect much from him is to live near to him—to walk with him. Among the men of our time who pride themselves on their higher intellectual appre-

hension of Divine truth, there is a strong bias to the side of regarding religion as a matter in which man is left very much to himself. Such men feel their responsibility within certain limits, but they have no adequate sense of their dependance, and religion in their view is so much a work of man, as hardly to seem to be at all a work of God. Yes! even men who claim to be accepted as orthodox and evangelical may be found evincing a strong disposition to narrow the sphere of the supernatural in religion as much as possible, limiting religious life almost entirely to a purely natural and self-disciplined action of the soul. We have too much preaching of this sort, and it is known by its fruits. Barrenness for the most part is the result. In aspiring to nothing higher than an ethical devotedness, it does not commonly achieve even that. Man needs more as a guilty being, and more as a depraved being, than this cast of thinking will ever bring to his aid.

SECTION IX.

CHURCH AUTHORITY.

BEFORE conducting this enquiry to its close, it may be well to glance at the short and easy way to rest which is presented in the sacerdotal theory of Romanism. In that theory the Church is infallible, the priest is the organ through whom its infallible decisions are pronounced, and to be absolved by man is to be accepted of God. In some cases this plenary remission has its conditions. There must be compensation or penance. But in a country at all like ours, it is seen to be expedient that this yoke should not be felt as very grievous. The scheme is well adapted to be attractive to a large class of minds,—to the depraved, who have only too much reason to dread the judgment after death; to the frivolous and worldly, who wish to be free from the fear of the future that they may be the more at liberty to enjoy the present; and to pious but timid persons, who imagine themselves incapable of judging as to their own state, and who would fain devolve that responsibility on some authority deemed more competent.

The few observations I am about to make will be designed to show that this supposed authority is really no authority at all; but my concern will be mainly with

the timid and conscientious class who fear to think on this subject, and not with the depraved and frivolous classes who have no disposition to do so.

Persons who say that to judge concerning their own spiritual state is too hard for them, should take care that in evading that duty they do not commit themselves to a service of much greater difficulty. To be sure that the Church of Rome is what she claims to be, they need know the origin and history of that Church—the Biblical and ecclesiastical grounds, stretching through some eighteen centuries, on which she rests her pretensions. If they imagine that they can trust themselves to traverse that field, and to reach just conclusions in so doing, surely after that achievement the perplexities which beset them as Protestants might well be seen to have been very small. This difficulty, which meets them at the very threshold of Romanism, is greater than anything that need be a trouble to them in the faith of Luther or Cranmer. The demand—the consistent and modest demand—of the Catholic priest is, that such persons should exercise their private judgment in settling one of the most difficult questions that can engage the human understanding, and that, having so done, they should then set that private judgment altogether aside, and promise never to exercise it more. It may be used so long as it tends to bring them into bondage, but having rendered them that piece of service, it is to be repressed and non-existent ever after!

Is it probable that there *is* an infallible authority on earth to which men should thus commit themselves? Is it certain that the Church of Rome *is* that authority? These are among the questions which such an

enquirer has to determine, and the responsibility of his decision upon them cannot possibly be devolved upon a priest. The priest may reason and persuade, but the act of submission must be the act of the person consulting him, and his must be all the consequences of that act. Through all the future this thought will go along with him. If I am in error, possibly in fatal error, by being in this Church, I have placed myself here, and the responsibility of what I have done must go with me to the end of life and to the bar of God.

It is indispensable to rest in the Church of Rome that her alleged unity should be fully credited. But this supposed unity is a fiction of the imagination. It does not exist. The differences of opinion among Catholics are much greater than the differences in the political ideas of Englishmen, ascending from the lowest Radicalism to the highest Toryism. All Catholics, for example, profess to believe in the infallibility of their Church. But where is it to be found? That is hard to say. To what end does it exist? That, too, is hard to say. Some have been extravagant enough to regard the pope as infallible in certain of his acts. Others insist that to the authority of such acts the cardinals, or other high ecclesiastics, must be conjoined with the pope; while others know nothing of infallibility apart from a general council. But then comes the question—what is a general council? Here new discussions arise. Some assign that distinction to one number of such assemblies, some to another. Supposing the attribute of infallibility to be found, what does it comprehend? Are we to accept its decisions on doctrinal points only, or on morals also, and on many ecclesiastical matters? Here the diversities of opinion are further multiplied.

In reasoning with a Catholic, accordingly, you have first to learn what sort of Catholic he may happen to be. Is he a liberal, or is he an ultramontanist? Is his liberalism of a faint hue or of a deeper die? Is his ultramontanism to the last degree ultra, or has that also its limitations? It is true, the Church of Rome has aimed at unity, by extruding discordant elements from her enclosure upon a large scale, and by the most unscrupulous means. Her boast of unity has been in the manner of the men who make a desert and call it peace. On the plea that she would be one, she has repressed without hesitancy, and destroyed without mercy, but her end has not been realised. Not only among her laity, but among her priests, the variations of opinion existing are such as I have stated. Hence the latitude of interpretation which lies open to the individual priest is very wide, both in regard to what the Church has really taught, and in regard to the spiritual state of the penitent before him. The conditions of spiritual safety as judged by a confessor of a serious or ascetic temper, will differ greatly from those which would satisfy a priest of a light and wordly habit. If the absolved in these different instances are alike safe, what becomes of truth and piety? If the blessing of the one priest has been valid, and that of the other has been vain, what becomes of the safety, and the sense of rest, said to be derived from confession and absolution? To choose an unwise priest may be to sink beneath the sacerdotal benediction into the region of the lost. Vast communities are ensnared by delusion in this form, and those who uphold the imposture are partakers of its sins.

From the above considerations, we are warranted in

saying, that if the variations of opinion among Protestants must be fatal to rest in any Church of that order, for the same reason there can be no rest in the Church of Rome. If we look dispassionately on the communities which profess to seek truth from the Bible, our wonder may well be, not that they so far differ from each other, as that they should be upon the whole so far agreed. They have their diversities as to polity, discipline, and worship, and as to some minor shades in theological opinion; but, concerning the great substance of God's revelation to man, they are, and have always been, to a surprising extent of one mind. The points on which the many Protestant confessions published in the sixteenth century differ from each other, are as nothing compared with those in which they are in harmony. And it is so still. The doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the office of the Holy Spirit have been found in the Bible by those who have sought truth there with so near an approach to unanimity as to demonstrate, in so far as such points admit of demonstration, that in these Catholic verities we have the faith in which men may attain to eternal life.

We have seen that the conditions of absolution in the Church of Rome will be sure to vary with the character of the priest, and that the confidence of safety, accordingly, on the ground of absolution, may be in not a few cases wholly delusive. But even this is not the most serious element of uncertainty in the operation of this theory. Who is to say that the priest himself is a person canonically authorised to take upon himself the office he has assumed? He may have received that office in the usual form from the

laying on of the hands of his bishop, and the bishop, too, may have been set apart to his office by the usual forms on the part of other bishops, and the chain may have gone back some way with strict regularity. But the way back over eighteen centuries is very long; and the consequence is, that there is not a bishop in the world who could show to any man of sense that he has any satisfactory evidence of his having come to his office through an unbroken succession of valid ordinations extending through all that space. The supposition of his gravely attempting to make out such a claim is simply ridiculous. If not grossly ignorant, he must know that the thing cannot be done.

If we go back to the times before the Reformation, we may say, in the language of Archbishop Whately, 'Amidst the numerous corruptions of doctrine and of 'practice, and gross superstitions, that crept in during 'those ages, we find recorded descriptions, not only of the 'profound ignorance and profligacy of life of many of 'the clergy, but also of the grossest irregularities in 'respect of discipline and form. We read of bishops 'consecrated when mere children; of men officiating 'who barely knew their letters; of prelates expelled, and 'others put into their places, by violence; of illiterate 'and profligate laymen, and habitual drunkards, admitted 'to holy orders; and, in short, of the prevalence of every 'kind of disorder, and reckless disregard of the decency 'which the Apostle enjoins.'* The question here is, whether, the decency which the Apostle enjoins being wholly absent in such cases, the pretence of ordination, where that pretence was kept up, should be accepted as

* *Kingdom of Christ*, 177.

virtue enough to compensate for all such scandals, and to qualify the priest for his sacred duties? If this question be answered in the affirmative, must not that be to charge the Holy One with putting ritualism before sanctity? Would it not be to reverse His teaching who reckoned the 'mint and cummin' as nothing, compared with the weightier matters—'judgment, mercy, 'and faith'? But if in such cases the virtues of succession have failed, and the chain has been broken, who is to determine the extent to which mischief has been thus diffused? Priests not duly ordained become bishops, and in their turn ordain other priests, and so the vitiating taint perpetuates itself, and expands itself beyond all remedy; and all the sacraments administered by these unauthorised functionaries have been without efficacy, and must have left the multitude who have confided in them without benefit from them. Those who believe in this exclusive system must suppose all this to have happened; or they must cede that the one thing needful in their Church is ecclesiastical order, not religious character.

But if informality may be a more fatal mistake than the most deadly sins, what has been the history of this formalism? Inasmuch as the gravest interests are dependant on the absence of the slightest flaw or defect in this matter, can we be sure that nothing of that kind has happened? Sad to say, the case in this view is quite as dark as in the former. Even so eminent a father as St. Jerome regarded the early Church as governed by presbyters, bishops being an aftergrowth. In that case presbyters must have ordained bishops, and if, in process of time, some of these bishops ordain others, their presbyterian origin must have left them wholly without

power to convey to others what is now said to be indispensable to valid ordination. They could not impart what they did not possess. Who can now say to what extent these pretensions to holy orders existed in those early times, or in what measure they have served to perpetuate a false succession in the place of the true one through later ages?

Further, in the fourteenth century, the Church which boasts of its unity, was rent in twain, a series of popes at Avignon launching their anathemas against another series in Rome, and the pontiffs in Italy fulminating, with no less good will, against their rivals in France. In this strife half Christendom took one side and half the other. So was Europe edified for full seventy years. The Church could not have two heads. The Italian popes or the French popes must have been mere pretenders, divested of all office by the anathemas of their canonical rivals, and all who received office from the hands of the false popes, or of their adherents, must have been incompetent to the services required from them. Their sacraments would be no sacraments, their ordinations no ordinations. Need more be said?

This succession dream, however, like many other errors, has some relation to a truth. The ministry of the Church was to be a ministry in unbroken succession. But a perpetual ministry is one thing, and a ministry which claims for the authority of each minister an unbroken succession from the Apostles downwards is another. Apostolical succession in the former sense we have, in the latter sense we have it not. The Christian ministry, as a ministry set apart to teach and educate the body to whom it ministers, is unique. The world had nothing

like it when it was originated, and has nothing like it now. In this order of men, however various the modes in which they have been called to their office, we have the true Apostolical succession. 'The things which thou 'hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same 'commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach 'others also.'* In this manner an intelligent and spiritual guardianship was to be secured to the Church. Paul counsels the possible, the Church of Rome has aimed at what providence has shown to be impossible.

Further it becomes persons specially desirous of rest to define to themselves the sort of rest they seek. It may be that it is a kind of rest which is not possible in this world, and that would not be expedient for us even if it were possible. It is no doubt true that our Lord has promised rest to his disciples even in this life; but it is a comparative rest, not that absolute measure of certainty which some persons are disposed to covet. We should not be surprised on being told that such rest will not be found in the present state. It would, no doubt, be agreeable to us to be assured that we are quite safe against any sin or error that might endanger our future happiness. But such security does not exist in the Church of Rome. Men who have shared in the grace of all her sacraments have been openly Godless, sensuous, and perpetrators of the most horrible enormities. Facts demonstrate that they were not regenerated by baptism, that they were not settled in the faith by confirmation, that they were not made saints by the service of the mass, and the presumption is, that extreme unction in their case, if allowed to avail themselves of it, was not more

* 2 Tim. ii. 2.

effective than the rites which preceded it. Hosts of the most detestable villains the world has known have lived professing themselves Catholics, and have been reputed as such. Hence it is clear, that men and women may become Catholics, and not be Christians; may be within the pale of the Roman Church, and have no prospect of finding a place in heaven.

All sin is a development of selfishness, and in this desire of absolute rest there may be much more of selfishness than of piety. We all know it is a pleasant thing to be free from fear; but to be free from fear where there is danger may be costly. The habit better becoming us is to watch and pray. Watchfulness and prayer suppose the presence of faith, and hope, and a feeling of dependance, and in these we must find our strength, and safety, and peace. It can never be well that we should be disposed to look for spiritual safety from the hand of man more than from the hand of God. The Redeemer is surely a more fitting object of trust than any mortal who may come into his place. Enlightened piety will be sure to speak thus, want of faith, of love, and of gratitude, may speak otherwise. If we look to Him who has said, 'Come unto me all you that labour and 'are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,'* He will not fail to give us rest—rest in the measure that shall be most conducive to the healthy action of Divine life in the soul. Rest sufficient to this end is the rest promised; more than this might conduce to indolence, presumption, and other follies.

Religion, then, is a matter between the soul and God, not a matter between the conscience and a priest; and

* Matt. xi. 28.

the mind which fails to exercise its right of private judgment in accordance with this truth, is chargeable with neglecting a grand duty, both towards God and towards itself. Such a mind is not faithful to its own nature, nor to Him who has made it to be what it is. It is not left to our option to think on this subject or not. We are bound to do so by the highest authority. We may not devolve this duty upon another.

The first preachers of the Gospel everywhere addressed themselves to the individual judgment and to the individual conscience, and sought to bring men to the faith of Christ by personal conviction. For this purpose they made their appeal to miracles, to prophecy, to history, and to human consciousness; and when the persons who were convinced and converted by this means were formed into churches, the language addressed to them was still the same. Their conversion and their growth in grace were to result from the same influences. Still the language of the guides of the Church continued to be, 'Let every man be persuaded in his own mind.'* It is true they made the acceptance of the substance of their message necessary to salvation. So does every man who now preaches it. But those gifted and wonder-working men were tender towards the weak in faith, and towards the weak in everything—being 'gentle 'among them, as a nurse cherisheth her children.' † Christians were to have the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and were to go on unto perfection, but their progress was to flow from the action of their own thought, of their own conscience, and from the impulse of their own affections. In all their perplexities they

* Rom. xiv. 5. † 1 Thess. ii. 7.

might look to their spiritual guides for help, as they would look for aid from wise and good men everywhere; but counsel from others was not to supersede the action of their own thought. The final judgment was always to be that of their own mind. 'Whosoever shall eat 'this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, 'shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 'But let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of 'that bread, and drink of that cup.'* So again, '*Examine* '*yourselves*, whether ye be in the faith; *prove your own* '*selves*. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus 'Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?'† Just the work which Romanism devolves upon the priest was thus pressed by Apostolic Christianity upon the individual judgment and conscience. It was not to be passed to another. To attempt such a transfer of duty would be unchristian. Could it be shown that all the authority possessed by the Apostles has descended to the Roman Church, the proper evidence of that fact would be, not that private judgment should be superseded, but rather that it should be encouraged, enjoined, and that everything should be done to secure to it a strong and healthy action.

It is not denied that liberty of thought does sometimes generate license of thought. Men being free to show themselves irreligious, they do so. Being free to say there is no God, they say so. But this is not the whole case. The impiety existing under the sway of Romanism is not the less impiety because concealed; and among all the causes which have tended to leaven society with such feeling, the insidious and intolerant ways of priests

* 1 Cor. xi. 27, 28. † 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

have been the most potent. Catholic countries have more superstition than Protestant countries, but have they more religion, more enlightenment, more freedom, more manhood? The facts of history, both past and present, answer that question. Since the age of the Reformation the power of Europe has been found north of the Alps, not on the Italian side of them—with the nations which have imposed natural limits on all ecclesiastical pretension, not with those which have bowed in greatest submission to it. Free thought has its incidental evils, but what follows where thought is not free? The blight where that order of things is submitted to, not only covers the whole of this life, it enters and pervades the life to come. Think for a moment of the power assumed by priests in such circumstances, and supposed by the people generally to be really possessed by them. The magistrate can destroy the body; but the priest can hand over the soul to the tormentors. The evil coming from the frown of the magistrate must be limited to time; that coming from the anathema of the priest, or from the mere withholding of sacerdotal services, may stretch through the ages of the future—through eternity! Millions in the past were made to believe this; millions in the present believe it; and who can estimate the sea of suffering which has gone forth upon humanity from the manner in which these terrors have been wielded? The great object with the priesthood of the Roman Church has ever been, to have the conscience of their victims at their disposal, and then to scare it to any extent that might be needful to make it the minister of their will. Of all the despotisms in the world's history, this spiritual despotism has been the

most terrible, the most withering and disastrous. It is, of course, readily conceded, that the Church of Rome, in common with all other Churches, includes many good men. It is not possible to limit the prejudices that may be originated and perpetuated by the force of circumstances.

Among the influences which have disposed many Protestants towards Rome, and which have carried some the whole way thither, there is no one that has been more powerful than the æsthetic influence, though in itself it is the least rational. It is true, papal Rome has patronised art. But so did pagan Greece, and we none of us think of turning pagans for that reason. The men who patronised art in Italy some three centuries since were many of them depraved and sceptical men, more pagan than Christian. Hence the strange mixture of the pagan and the Christian in many of the works which they called into existence. In Rome through the half century which preceded the elevation of Leo X., the man who hesitated to speak of the human soul as having no higher destiny than the instinct of the brute was accounted by the ruling spirits of the time as a dullard who could not keep pace with the times. 'On 'his death bed,' says Dean Milner, 'Cosmo dé Medici is 'attended by Ficinus, who assures him of another life 'on the authority of Socrates, and teaches him resig-'nation in the words of Plato, Xenocrates, and other 'Athenian sages.' *

If much may be said about the patronage of art by Rome, much may also be said about the corruptions and perversions of art through her influence. Nothing can be imagined more offensive to good taste than the tawdry representations of sacred objects to be seen within the

* *Hist.* vi. 438.

walls of innumerable Catholic churches—pictures of the coarsest and most contemptible description hung up to be objects of worship; images illuminated and decked out in the most trumpery style of millinery to attract the gaze and admiration of an ignorant and superstitious multitude. And what the lowest forms of art are employed to do upon the lowest, the higher forms of it are employed to do upon the more cultivated. For in all this homage to pictures and images, what do we see but a palpable reproduction, under a new set of names, of the old system of creature-worship prevalent in Italy before Christianity was known there? It is this tendency in the use of the arts by Romanists—a tendency not so much to elevate humanity as to sensualise and lower it, that has led men of high culture, such as Milton, to execrate the Church of Rome as the great sorceress of the nations depicted and denounced in Holy Writ. To use the simile of Lord Macaulay, Milton saw in the beauty of art as assumed by Rome a beauty like that which Othello saw in Desdemona—beauty with an impure soul beneath. Hence, while 'his heart relents, 'his hand is firm.' The vesture of a corrupt Church flaunted before our great poet might be never so rich and beautiful, but it availed not. In his eyes it was the harlot's robe. The way to a true rest does not lie in that direction. The pure leads to the peaceful. The enlightened do not need such trappings to lead them to the invisible; and with the unenlightened they come into its place. Modern souls become inquisitors while upholding such things, Apostolic souls could dispense with them and become martyrs.

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